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# DIRTBIKE

## RIDER



# AX

## REVOLUTION!

ALL THE ACTION, ALL THE DRAMA, ALL THE THRILLS  
AND SPILLS FROM THE INDOOR MOTOCROSS  
SENSATION THAT'S SWEEPING THE NATION

## SCARLET FEVER!

WILL HONDA'S ALL-NEW CRF450R  
STRIKE DOWN THE COMPETITION?

## FAST N' FURIOUS!

HARDCORE MOTO MADNESS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

## KRISTIAN WHATLEY

THE FORMER BRITISH CHAMP TALKS ABOUT GETTING BACK ON TRACK

## THE JOY OF SX!

WHY AMA SUPERCROSS IS JUST SO DAMN ENJOYABLE...



GOGGLE PREP GUIDE | SHERCO | CAB SCREENS HUSQVARNA | BURNICLE'S BEAT



A full-page photograph of a motocross rider, Dean Wilson, in action. He is wearing a blue and red racing suit with 'ONEAL' and '100' visible, a matching helmet with '100' and 'SHOEI' branding, and red gloves. He is riding a blue and white Yamaha YZ450F motocross bike, which has 'GALFER' and 'DUNLOP' branding on the front fender. The bike is covered in mud, indicating a recent race or practice session. The background is a blurred dirt track.

**dean  
Wilson**  
WELCOME TO THE TEAM



# O'NEAL

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black/hi-viz

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red/blue


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 **JACK BRUNELL** – 72PTS

 **THOMAS RAMETTE** – 77PTS

 **CEDRIC SOUBEYRAS** – 81PTS




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© RAY ARCHER

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IS A SERIOUS BIT OF KIT...

© RAY ARCHER



# ED SPEAKS

**T**here was a time just a few years back when I considered myself to be a master of all trades – Jack of none. By that I mean I was in the enviable position of being the only person in the UK off-road publishing industry who ticked all the boxes – I could ride, fix, shoot and write about bikes, clothing and stuff as well as do magazine production things thanks to my apprenticeship with the Lawless one.

Then I got old, my hair got greyer, my screwed knee became totally unhinged – well, it ceased to bend at least – and I got grumpier, trumpier and, erm, lumpier. No longer able to ride, I felt that my stock had diminished somewhat and my focus changed to the point I became obsessed with being editor. Nowt wrong with that you might think but sometimes you should be careful what you wish for.

After being strung along for a wee while, my dreams finally came true when I landed the editorship of not only DBR but TMX too and my working week went from hanging out at tracks shooting stuff and interviewing fast folk to organising things, doing paperwork, filling in forms and answering to men in suits who wanted to know this, that and the other about office politics, risk assessments and photocopier toner usage and not a thing about dirty dirt bikes.

So with my working week now being desk based it's a real treat to get out to the races on a weekend. So far this year that has meant Arenacross all the way although between me writing this and this magazine hitting newsagents shelves I'll have taken in the Hawkstone International as well.

This year's AX Tour has been outstanding and after five action-packed rounds we've seen

four different championship leaders as Angelo Pellegrini, Cyrille Coulon, Adam Chatfield and Cedric Soubeyras have traded the red plate ripped from Thomas Ramette's SR75 World Team Suzuki at round one. As things stand there are just a handful of points separating the top four and there are still six racers who have a real shot at clinching the title.

Unfortunately, our boy Cyrille Coulon ain't one of 'em anymore after a Belfast bang-up tore something in his knee and ended his championship chances right there and then. Up until that point CC5 had been masterful and had it not been for an overenthusiastic Adam Chatfield ramming him at round one would most likely have sat on a 20 point series lead after round three!

One of the most popular riders on the tour – especially with the other riders who flock around the bearded one – Cyrille's skills are outstanding and I've seen him do stuff on a bike that's absolutely mind-boggling.

And believe it or not Coulon is the only Pro rider to have raced in each and every AX series held so far – he's never finished the championship outside of the top five up until now either – and in my mind is definitely deserving of a lifetime achievement award or sticking in the AX Hall of Fame or something. So come on ASL – let's make it happen!



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*Sully*



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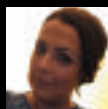
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# ON THE COVER...





## SCOTTISH ACE ROSS RUTHERFORD HITS THE DUBAI DESERT FOR A RAY ARCHER PHOTOSHOOT

Ross Rutherford is the winningest rider in Scottish motocross history with no fewer than seven national titles notched up north of the border. Although spectacularly successful in his home championship, this Scottish ace still funds his racing by working full-time as a tiler. However, this winter Bunga's been lucky enough to stay in Dubai with the SRG Motorsports crew in preparation for another crack at the Maxxis series. Ray Archer caught up with Ross and ex-pat Ryan Blair for a fairly badass photoshoot in the desert where he fired off these doozies. Check in with us next month for the full 'Bunga 7-time Abroad' story...



# UNPREDICTABLE

*[uhn-pri-dik-tuh-buh-l]*

*adjective* – not able to be predicted, changeable  
*synonyms:* unforeseeable, incalculable, uncertain, unsure, doubtful, dubious, random

Photos by Andrew Hill and Ian Cairns

**U**npredictable is perhaps the only word that's suitable to describe what's gone down so far in the 2017 AX Tour. With five rounds from seven already in the history books we've had four different Main Event winners and four different championship leaders too – and they're not even the exact same four! Even stranger is the fact that the dude that holds the red plate headed into the final stretch hasn't won a Main Event yet this year and has been consistently inconsistent throughout the full series. How fudged up is that?

Manchester's Manchester Arena hosted round one of the championship and it was obvious we

were in for a roller coaster year right from the off. After SR75 World Team Suzuki racers had aced all four of the Pro Class heats – two for reigning champ Thomas Ramette and two for Cyrille Coulon – it was Team RFX powered by St Blazey MX's Angelo Pellegrini who set fastest time in the new-for-'17 Hot Lap segment of the show to pick up three bonus points and take an early season lead. And after 14 of the most mixed up laps in Arenacross history that lead remained in place after the Main Event had run its course.

After the gate dropped for the points payer it was Ramette and Buildbase Honda's Adam Chatfield who hit turn one at the head of the pack but while Adam powered away Thomas washed out, then





found a stack of grip and shot across the front of the pack while hanging off the side of his Suzuki. It was inevitable that someone would hit him but perhaps unfortunate that it was arch-enemy Cedric Soubeyras who clattered into him sending both riders to the floor and out of contention for the win that night.

At the front Chatfield held the early advantage as Pellegrini moved through to second with Coulon charging through the pack to third before reeling Angelo in and making a pass stick on him too. Obviously the fastest man on the track Cyrille then hunted down Adam, weighed up his options and then blasted by across the whoops to take first place. But he

didn't keep it long...

Chatfield attacked right back and got into the side of Coulon in the very next left-hander, the contact bending Cyrille's shifter underneath his engine cases and sending Adam to the floor. This gifted the lead – and eventually the race win – to Pellegrini and second to Keystone Honda's Florent Richier as Chatfield remounted for third. Coulon would struggle round – stuck in first gear – to eventually finish ninth, one place behind Soubeyras and one ahead of Ramette.

Pellegrini's luck took a turn for the worse at round two in Glasgow as a fairly innocent looking crash in the Main was made a million times worse when Team Green Kawasaki's

Hugo Basaula nailed his stricken Suzuki snapping off the handlebar mounting bolts in the process. A DNF still netted Pellegrini eight points on the night but the red plate was gone...

Coulon had been exceptionally fast in Manchester and he kept that form alive north of the border too setting the fastest Hot Lap before acing the Main to take a maximum points haul home of 23! Second for Ramette, third for promoter's choice Adrien Escoffier (MVR-D Husqvarna) and a mixed up night for the others saw Coulon snatch the series lead n'all with Pellegrini edging out Escoffier, Soubeyras, Chatfield and Ramette for second. >>





Just four points separated the top six at this point in proceedings although that wouldn't be the case after round three!

With the red plate looking right at home on his SR75 Suzuki, Super Cyrille struck gold in the Genting Arena. Second to Soubeyras in the Hot Lap segment the veteran Frenchie – who's now 34 years young – pulled the pin in the Main Event to power away to a dominant victory while early leader Richier held tough for second beating top Brit Jack Brunell across the line. Of the title contenders Ramette had gone down all alone on lap one while Escoffier and Soubs tangled late in the Main sending them both over a berm – they'd remount to finish seventh, ninth and 10th. Pellegrini meanwhile finished the race in fourth with Chatfield one back.

Two nights of racing in Belfast saw the red plate change hands three times as Coulon

crashed hard in a Friday night heat which ultimately meant he'd run 11-DNF over the course of the weekend. This was a bitter blow to the popular Frenchman who'd sat on a nine point buffer before racing began.

With soft dirt and a fairly simple layout starts were critical as Adam Chatfield's weekend proved. A holeshot and victory in Friday's Main were backed up with a 10th place start and eighth place finish on Saturday. Maybe the red plate he earned on night one weighed a wee bit heavier than expected...

Friday night's final had the fans of their feet as Soubeyras and Ramette pushed Adam across the line with less than half a second covering the top three as the chequered flag flew. Saturday's racing would be less spectacular as Escoffier became the fourth rider to win a Main with a relatively easy run

to the flag after he edged out Ramette on lap one. Thomas hung tough for second while slow starter Soubeyras scythed his way from the midpack to third at the finish. His reward for that effort – the championship lead!

So with only two rounds left to go Soubeyras leads the pack with his RFX St Blazey team-mate Angelo Pellegrini and reigning champ Ramette tied for second just four points in arrears. Meanwhile Chatfield is the top Brit in fourth with Brunell also still in the hunt in fifth.

Sheffield's next and then it's London – can Chatfield turn it around? Will Soubs do a Ramon and be crowned champion without ever winning a race? Has Pellegrini got what it takes to clinch it? Or can Ramette overcome his unlucky streak and take title number three? Stay tuned and we'll fill you in next month...





Crowded skies at round one in Manchester as Florent Richier and Thomas Ramette lead the Pro Class pack

# AX TOP TEN RESULTS

## TRACKED

### ROUND 1 ROUND 2 ROUND 3 ROUND 4 ROUND 5

Pellegrini 23	Coulon 33	Coulon 55	Chatfield 64	Soubeyras 81
Richier 18	Pellegrini 31	Pellegrini 46	Coulon 63	Pellegrini 77
Chatfield 16	Escoffier 31	Richier 46	Soubeyras 63	Ramette 77
Escoffier 15	Soubeyras 30	Chatfield 44	Pellegrini 62	Chatfield 75
Brunell 14	Chatfield 30	Brunell 43	Richier 60	Brunell 72
Soubeyras 13	Ramette 29	Soubeyras 42	Ramette 59	Richier 69
Bayliss 13	Brunell 27	Ramette 41	Brunell 56	Coulon 63
Basaula 12	Richier 27	Escoffier 41	Basaula 41	Escoffier 61
Ramette 10	Bayliss 25	Basaula 30	Escoffier 41	Basaula 53
Coulon 10	Basaula 22	Bayliss 25	Bayliss 35	Bayliss 44

### THE TOP FIVE AFTER FIVE!

1st Cedric Soubeyras RFX St Blazey Suzuki 81 points

If you'd told me ahead of round one that a rider with an 8-4-10-2-3 scorecard would hold down a four point lead headed into the final two rounds of the series then I'd have never believed you. In fact, if you'd told me that Cedric Soubeyras would still be winless at this point in the championship then I'd have thought you were a total joker. The fact that both facts are true is certainly surprising to say the least but here we are. It's certainly not down to a lack of speed, effort or preparation although there is one area that needs some improvement – his starts. That said he's still best of the bunch at the mo so I guess he's not doing too bad really...

Equal 2nd Angelo Pellegrini RFX St Blazey Suzuki 77 points

If Tommy Searle hadn't injured his knee then Angelo Pellegrini would be leading the 2017 AX Tour – or be second if Tommy had come along and dominated. But whatever. Anyway, the moment that Tommy's replacement at Team Green – that's Hugo Basaula in case you forgot – landed on Pellegrini's downed Suzuki in Glasgow and ripped his handlebars off their mounts is by far Angelo's lowest moment of the tour so far and if that hadn't have happened then I reckon that he'd have remounted and easily finished eighth or better which would be enough to equal or better Soub's score. The Glasgow result aside Pellegrini's 1-11-4-4-4 scorecard screams consistency and as thing stand that's paying off – good work that man!

Equal 2nd Thomas Ramette SR75 World Team Suzuki 77 points

Starting the season with your handlebar stuck inside your boot really isn't the one and is the main reason that Thomas Ramette ain't rocking the red plate right now – that and a slip off in Birmingham which also kept Thomas down the pack. Other than that, Ramette's not finished off the podium all year, finishing second in Glasgow and running 3-2 in Belfast. With things so tight – and double points up for grabs in London – there's still every chance Thomas could threepeat.

4th Adam Chatfield Buildbase Honda Racing 75 points

For Adam Chatfield to lead the series at the halfway point was fairly phenomenal but then came the worst 'Saturday night' performance since Whigfield killed her own classic live on Danish TV – boom, I went there! After barely scraping into the final through the LCQ Head-to-Heads, Chatfield turned a 10th place start into an eighth place finish which was disappointing to say the least considering Soubeyras made it through to third from an equally abysmal getaway. Otherwise it's been a pretty good year for the 'Ginger Ninja' who has run 3-6-6-1-8. It's also worth noting that Adam's also the highest ranked rider not to have picked up any bonus points in the Hot Lap segment so far this year.

5th Jack Brunell Team Green Kawasaki 72 points

Jack Brunell's had a very respectable tour so far with the highlights being that third place in the Genting Arena Main Event and night two in Belfast where he went fastest in the Hot Lap section. Only nine points down on the championship pace setter, Jack's still in the title hunt and as Wembley's only 25 miles from his home in Ascot he'd like nothing more than to go out with a win – and potentially the title if the double points payout works in his favour!

Reigning champ Ramette and current series leader Cedric Soubeyras go bar-to-bar inside the sold out Genting Arena





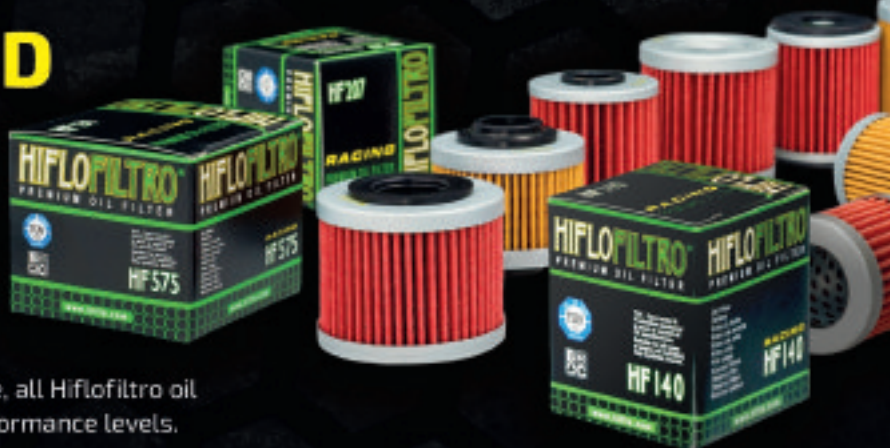
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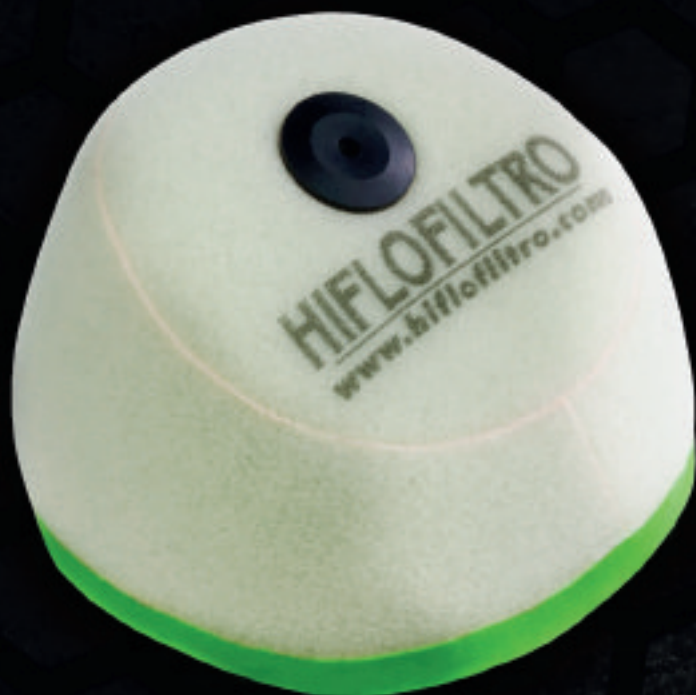


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# FANTASY AX

## WHO'S THE HOTTEST HOT LAPPER AROUND AND HOW WOULD THINGS LOOK IF THAT PORTION OF THE SHOW DIDN'T PAY POINTS?

The Hot Lap for the top eight qualifiers on the night gives the racers an extra opportunity to add points to their championship tally but what if it were a championship in its own right? We've figured out a fantasy top six and then removed those scores from the actual series standings to see how things would be shaping up if the Hot Lap didn't pay out championship points...

One thing that's abundantly clear is that Cedric Soubeyras is the master of the fast lap and is cashing in big time with a whopping 12 bonus points amassed over the five rounds held so far thanks to his 2-2-1-1-2 Hot Lap scorecard. Best of the rest as things stand is Cyrille Coulon on five, Ramette and Pellegrini both have four, Brunell three for his Belfast victory and Richier two.

So how would things look in the championship chase if the Hot Lap counted for now? Well, it turns things on its head massively with actual series leader Soubeyras ending up back in fourth when everything's recalculated.

With Pellegrini and Ramette locked on points in both the actual championship and our fantasy Hot Lap version they gain or lose nothing on each other at all and as well as being joint second in reality are rather bizarrely tied in second place in our virtual world too.

So who's first? Who is AX's #1 out and out racer? Well, apparently that guy is 2013 AX Tour Champion Adam Chatfield whose overall season score of 75 is made up of points purely scored in Main Events. With no bonus points to remove from his total he trades places with Soubeyras to top our fantasy standings.

Suddenly the Hot Lap segment seems a little more important, huh?

### FANTASY AX!

#### Hot Lap

- 1 Soubeyras 12
- 2 Coulon 5
- 3 Ramette 4  
Pellegrini 4
- 5 Brunell 3
- 6 Richier 2

#### AX Championship without Hot Lap

- 1 Chatfield 75
- 2 Pellegrini 73
- 3 Ramette 73
- 4 Soubeyras 69
- 5 Brunell 69
- 6 Richier 67

\* Both championship tables for Sutt's entertainment purposes only and should be ignored by anyone with any sense...



Team Green Kawasaki's Jack Brunell took third in Birmingham



## DON'T MISS OUT!

### GET TICKETS NOW FOR THE END OF SEASON SWING...

Just two rounds remain in this year's AX Tour – that's Sheffield on Feb 11 and London one week later. If you witnessed the finale to last year's championship then you'll know it was an absolute barnstormer and although we can't guarantee more of the same we can predict that something funky is gonna happen because things are just that wide open.

To obtain tickets to either round – or both – head online to [www.arenacrossuk.com](http://www.arenacrossuk.com) or call 0844 338 8000 now before the best seats in the house get sold out.







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Buildbase Honda's  
Chris Bayliss goes full  
gas in Glasgow



## BRIGHT LITES!

**SMALL BIKES BUT HUGE BAR-BANGIN' BRAWLS...**

AX's 250F division – for riders aged 23 and under – has been an awesome replacement for the Rookies class since it's initial inception in 2016. That first year may have been a little sparse on entries at times but the quality of action was definitely full-on and in your face thanks to the epic scraps between eventual champ Joe Clayton and George Clarke.

Both are back for the 2017 Tour along with new additions like Chris Bayliss, Dylan Woodcock and French sensation Yannis Irsuti although we unfortunately lost Clarke at the season-opener when he turned his arm to rubber in a fairly innocent looking crash.

After 10 races – the Lites class race two points payers per round – things are quite tight at the top of the series standings mostly down to Irsuti's inability to get on with the softer soil used in Belfast being more used to rock hard conditions in the French SX Tour.

Up until that point Irsuti had been mostly dominant scoring maximum points in Manchester and Birmingham while running 4-1 in Glasgow. A 2-2 scorecard on night one was enough to secure the overall on Friday while a crash filled 12th in race one on Saturday followed up with a second secured him sixth overall.

As things stand Yannis leads Bayliss by just five points with only two rounds left while Woodcock is nine in arrears to the Frenchman. Meanwhile, Clayton looks unlikely to defend his title as he's slipped 18 behind the pace-setter!



Yannis Irsuti has been fairly dominant in the Pro Lites division



Dylan Woodcock takes a pair of Pro Lites wins over the Belfast weekender

Scottish ace Billy MacKenzie  
gets off his couch to take on  
the AX elite in the SSE Hydro



## RETURN OF THE MAC!

**BILLY BANGS ONE IN NORTH OF THE BORDER...**

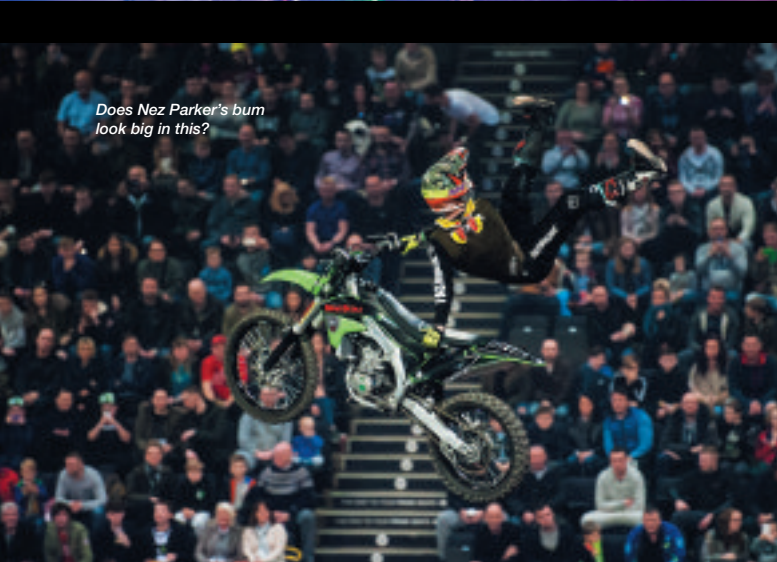
AX aficionados will no doubt remember the early days of the sport in the UK when Planit Promotions ran the UKSX series in Y2K. Well, prior to that full-on championship there was a two-night one-off in Exeter's West Point Arena the winter before that attracted a top-line entry and Saturday's racing was even shown over two weekends on Channel 4. This was when there were only four TV channels on offer so it was quite a big deal.

The winner of the 125cc Pro Class on the Saturday night was a 15-year-old Yamaha-riding upstart called Billy MacKenzie. You might have heard of him as he went on to become one of the UK's finest ever motocross racers winning British titles and even the odd GP. After failing to find a suitable ride one year Billy headed Down Under where after a few bonzer seasons beating the Bruces in their own backyard his career kinda fizzled out like a well-used and abused BBQ. Since then he's just been living the dream building bikes and generally just doing Billy stuff.

For whatever reason MacKenzie scored a wildcard ride at his home round of the Tour, got up off the couch and put in a very respectable pair of rides in the heats then did enough in the Head-to-Heads to secure a place in the Main Event although I suspect he'd have been promoter's choice anyway.

Once in the final Billy put in a strong ride for someone with zero preparation although as it turns out actually finished eighth after fading somewhat in the closing stages. I ain't bagging on Billy though as what he achieved was bloody brilliant and it was nice to have Mac back albeit only briefly...





Does Nez Parker's bum  
look big in this?

Human beatbox Edgar Torronteras  
can whip it with the best of them...





*Petr Pilat's poise is perfect...*



*Have you heard the Ozzy Man review of Steve Sommerfeld's sick freestyle stunts? Nah, us neither...*



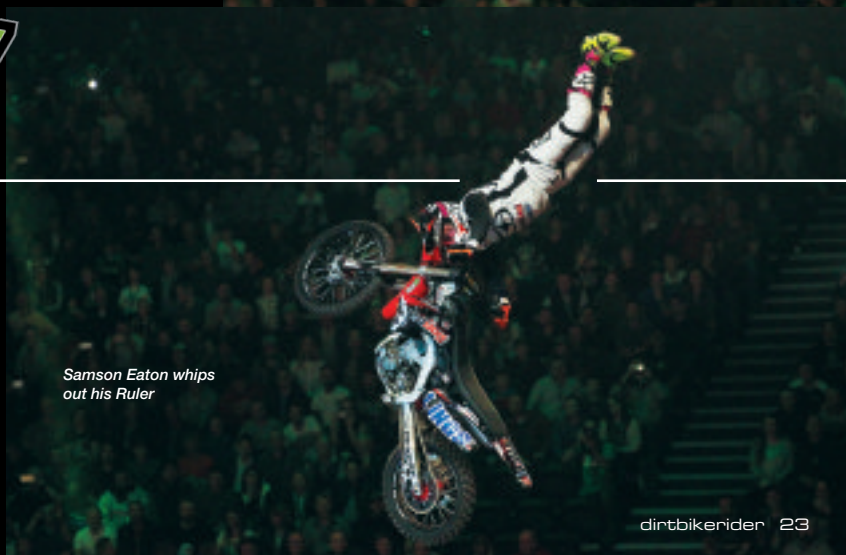
*What time is it Jamie Squibb? It's nine o'clock nac of course!*

# FMX FRENZY!



## GOING UPSIDE DOWN AND INSIDE OUT WITH THE FRUITLOOP FREESTYLE TROOP

As well as being the only place to see badass indoor motocross racing in the UK the AX Tour also showcases the best of British FMX – along with a handpicked sprinkling of invited international jump monkeys n'all. To say this year's freestyle rider roster is off the hook is an understatement with Bolddog boys Dan Whitby, Samson Eaton and Arran Powley throwing down in each and every show along with Nez Parker, Jamie Squibb, Edgar Torronteras, Petr Pilat and Aussie ace Steve Sommerfeld. In a three-hour show that's packed with highlights the FMX sessions definitely add a stack of additional value to the high-octane ambience of AX's overall awesomeness.



*Samson Eaton whips out his Ruler*



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Sam Sunderland becomes the first Brit to win the Dakar!



# NEWS! NEWS! NEWS!

A GLOBAL TOUR OF OFF-ROAD NEWS AND GOSSIP...

**S**am Sunderland – Dakar Rally winner 2017. How about that? As we went to print last month this year's rally had just got going and after two weeks of intense racing we found ourselves at the end of it with a first-time British winner. Incredible stuff and a result that we're sure will see Sam's name become a fixture in motorcycling's Hall of Fame. It's early days but we reckon a MBE or something fanciful like that has gotta be on the cards now.

Right now we're still trying to get our heads around what's just happened. History making, a feat no British man has ever done before — two wheels or four. In 2014 when Sam became the first British stage winner since the legendary John Deacon, it was plain to see he was going

to be a bit special. Now three years on and he's a Dakar champion. Of course, in between that he's suffered his fair share of pain and broken bones but the dream never died, the belief never faded. So for any kids reading this, what we're saying is never give up — dream, believe, achieve.

In what was a fairly rock 'n roll race, the Dakar naturally had its share of twists and turns. The first major news came on stage four when defending champion Toby Price crashed out, smashing his femur into four pieces. Ouch.

Honda were dealt a serious blow too when they picked up a hefty time penalty for refuelling where they shouldn't. Joan Barreda, then leading, dropped out of the reckoning, while all the time Sunderland was casually chipping away, mile after mile, stage after stage.

Come week two — when the race really got going — Sunderland was perfectly positioned to capitalise on the drama surrounding him. Keeping his nose clean for the final couple of thousand kilometres — we say that tongue in cheek like he was spinning down his local for a pint of milk — and the KTM rider completed the 12th and final stage as this year's Dakar winner. Magical.

"When Toby went out of the race it was a blow to the team as he's a good friend," told Sunderland. "Because of the strong bonds we have in our team it helped us to pull together and strive to do something special."

"There are a lot of fast guys that have the potential to win this race, I think cutting out the mistakes was the key to this win. When I crossed the line my emotions really took over."





Jorge Prado takes first blood in the Italian International series

I've had a lot of weight on my shoulders for the last six days. Now it feels incredible."

From everyone at DBR Towers, and just off road dirt scooters in general, congratulations Sam – you are the man!

Jeffrey Herlings much anticipated 450 class debut – aside from the MXoN last season – expected at the opening round of the Italian championship in Sardinia was delayed as he was forced to pull out due to an inflamed tendon in his wrist.

The Bullet was scheduled to go up again current and previous MXGP champions Gajser, Cairoli and Febvre along with a stacked field of MXGP front runners but was advised to take 10 days off the bike due to an injury incurred by, simply, too much riding. The big day will now be put

on ice until the opening round of the world championship in Qatar just to moisten us up even more than mums at a Michael Buble concert.

Deano Wilson's persistence has finally paid off with a factory ride for Rockstar Husqvarna. Wilson has gone it solo so far in 2017 and had only been able to budget for rounds one to five with his privateer Yammy assisted by his dad. The future beyond round five as the Supercross series headed to the East Coast was uncertain but he rolled the dice to be there and present, banged in a few close to top-10 rides and was rewarded with a factory slot for what is rumoured to be the rest of the year.

Ken Roczen came into the US season as favourite to win after his dominating >>



## JARVIS ROCKER!

### GRIMBO ACES ALES HARD ENDURO

Graham Jarvis is off to a cracking start in 2017 by adding the Alestrem Hard Enduro victory to his tally – his third victory in as many weekends.

Hot out of the traps for 2017, Jarvis headed to France for his first major international race of the season and duly delivered. Against KTM's Alfredo Gomez and Jonny Walker, Sherco's Wade Young and Mario Roman, his teammate Billy Bolt plus the 450 entry list, Jarvis ended the two-day race on the top step of the podium.

"I'm shattered," said Jarvis at the finish line. "It feels good to win but that was a long hard race. We raced for almost seven hours non-stop. It was a tough battle all day so to come out on top is awesome."

Kicking things off with a Saturday prologue, it was Gomez and Walker who battled for top honours, with Gomez snatching the win over Walker and Young. Getting down to business on Sunday, the three-lap race properly put the guys through their paces.

The fight for victory came down to the wire, with Jarvis pipping Roman to the post in the final one hundred metres of the race for the win. Young came home in third. Walker – regrouped after getting lost in the dark – was the fourth and final finisher.



## RIESA'S PIECES!

### COLTON ON TOP IN GERMAN SUPERENDURO GP

Husqvarna's Colton Haaker made it a clean sweep at round two of the SuperEnduro World Championship in Germany. Coming out swinging after the Christmas break, Haaker made it three wins from three starts while also topping the Akrapovic SuperPole in Riesa for an extra three points.

Ensuring full control over proceedings, the reigning champ hardly put a foot wrong during the night to pull clear in each heat race with the win, putting himself at the head of the championship point's standings.

Behind Haaker, it was KTM's Alfredo Gomez and Jonny Walker who battled for the remainder of the podium. A more consistent night from Gomez saw him edge out Walker for the runner-up result.

There were also good results in the Junior class for British riders with Lee Sealey (Yamaha) claiming a race win and Gethin Humphreys finishing fourth overall.



# NEWS!

## SHOW TIME!

### TWINNIES APLENTY AT TELFORD SHOW...

If you like your dirty bikes with more than one shock absorber on the rear end then Telford is the place to be on February 18-19 as the Classic Dirt Bike Show sponsored by Hagon Shocks hits the International Centre.

As well as a few tonnes of classic off-road iron for you to drool over there'll also be an eclectic mix of star guests including former ISDT competitor and head honcho behind the Duke Video brand – Mr Peter Duke – plus off-road icons Roger 'can you smell petrol?' Harvey and his Ford Tranny loving travelling partner Jack Burnicle who'll not only be master of ceremonies but a star guest as well. How Jack's gonna cope interviewing himself remains to be seen but get yo' self to Telford and you can see how it all unfolds.

For more information check out [www.classicbikeshows.com](http://www.classicbikeshows.com).



## IRON MAN

### POSKITT PODIUMS IN DAKAR'S NO ASSISTANCE CLASS

Motorcycling vagabond Lyndon Poskitt claimed a massively impressive runner-up result in the 2017 Dakar Rally Malle Moto class. For those not in the know, Malle Moto means no assistance where only the rider is responsible for maintenance and daily repairs of their motorcycle. It really is the Ironman way to race Dakar.

Having ridden halfway around the world just to get to Dakar's start line in his 'Races to Places' global adventure, Poskitt then put his race face on. Eventually going second in class, he also finished 39th overall out of the 167 motorcycle riders who started.

"It was the most brutal thing I ever did," the 38-year-old motorcycle adventurer admits. "From January 2nd to 14th, the Rally covered a total distance of over 5,500 miles, all the way between Asunción in Paraguay and Buenos Aires in Argentina.

"And we experienced everything you can imagine – sweltering heat and icy cold, sand and mud, ice and snow, stages of more than 600 miles! Never in my life have I crashed this often!"

Ken Roczen was the man to beat in the US until he broke his arm



Racing in the AX Tour has been closer than a family from the Deep South

performance at the Monster Energy Cup and some grapevine tales of awesome pre-season training speed.

For the opening two rounds he delivered on that by taking away a maximum haul of points. But round three saw the German HRC rider suffer a brutal crash which has cast doubt over the remainder of his year – not just the supercross season – with a compound fracture of his wrist, dislocation of his wrist and also a dislocation of his elbow multiple surgeries were required before the process of recovery began.

So, who will fill Roczen's shoes at Honda? Well, the internet melted down hoping James Stewart would get the call but that's not going to happen. The strongest candidate is Freddie Noren who often fills in for injured Honda riders and is a test and development rider for Honda already. Noren in fact has been competing in the opening Supercross rounds riding a 250F in the main 450 class in preparation for the start of the East Coast Lites season and actually qualified for the Main at round two in San Diego becoming the first 250F bike to qualify for a 450 main.

But Honda don't actually have an obligation to field a replacement rider for

Roczen should they decide not to. As Honda title sponsor their own team they have no big money bigwigs to appease and so should they decide they just want to solely focus on Seeley, they can.

You may have heard of the winter training venue in Spain, Red Sands? Well Red Sands is co-owned by Harry Everts and for many years Stefan and Harry Everts have run their winter training camps at the facility just south of Barcelona.

Nowadays it has become almost as good as a midweek GP during the months of January and February as Grand Prix teams and riders flock to the venue in preparation of the new season. This year they decided to hold a big bucks race in January capitalising on everyone's training schedule and signed up virtually all of the factory riders to compete. Sadly, however, this year's random Spanish weather washed the place out and forced them to cancel a day or two before the main races began leaving a massive hole in the organiser's pocket. Shame.

Remember Aleksandr Tonkov? He is still having visa issues and is still banned from entering the EU. If you remember, Tonkov went missing during last season due to the





Tony Cairoli started his season with a win on home soil!

fact that he wasn't allowed to re-enter the EU after a return trip home to Russia. Well those visa problems haven't been resolved and have forced the Russian to look for paths new. He's landed a ride for the factory supported Kawasaki team in Australia to ride MX2. Tonkov is above the 24 year-old age limit for MX2 now to race GP and would have had to move up the MXGP this year had he been allowed back.

Tony Cairoli fired off a warning shot to his world title rivals ahead of the opening round in Qatar by dominating the Italian championship in his homeland by running away with both motos by upwards of 15 seconds. TC was never headed all day and beat all of the major players expected to contend for the world title this year. Okay, it was on his local stomping ground but it was an ass-whooping all the same and Cairoli puts it down to a strong winter of testing and riding more than his local knowledge. TC looks ready.

Romain Febvre, however, wasn't so smug. After fighting out a fourth place finish in the first heat a killer wreck in race two saw the former world champ sample the Sicilian sand and pick up a concussion for his efforts.

Red Bull Factory KTM MX2 hotshot Jorge Prado was the man in MX2. In the opening MX2 race the recently turned 16-year-old got his

customary quick start and laid wood to the rest of the chasing pack for an impressive win as he starts his first full season in MX2. The following 'Elite' race which is a combined MX1 and MX2 moto and Pauls Jonass was the first of the 250Fs to the finish in the mixed-capacity class.

Adam Chatfield took the win at the fourth round of the Arenacross tour in Belfast becoming the first British winner in ages (it was actually London last year, Bry – Sutty)! Courtesy of his win –and the situation of others – the Buildbase Honda rider took the red plate as well to become the first British guy to boast that feat in even ages-er. I would love to tell you the official length of time at this point but I'm writing this on the ferry on the way home from Ireland (it was actually the end of the inaugural AX Tour back in 2013, Bry – Sutty). Sadly he didn't hold it long as the very next round on the very next night he lost the championship lead to Cedric Soubeyras.

Soubs in fact became the fourth rider in five rounds to lead the championship. The series has provided huge entertainment at every round this season which is affirmed by the very fact that there have been four different points leaders in four weekends of action – Belfast hosted two rounds on one weekend. It's completely unpredictable.

Cyrille Coulon was establishing himself as the most consistently strong rider early in the season but on night one in Belfast a major incident off the start left him with a badly damaged knee. Soldiering on he completed round four with the injury but couldn't complete round five the following night and gave up his strong position near the top of the championship.

Billy Mac made a return to the big stage when he made a one-off rare appearance at the Glasgow round of the Arenacross Tour. With the winter weather against him, the 32 team-old veteran rider was unable to put in any riding preparation prior and so rode a bike for the first time since last summer in the event's first practice but achieved the feat of qualifying into the Main and eventually finishing a respectable eighth.

Kristian Whatley was supposed to ride for MVR-D Husqvarna this race season in Arenacross and outdoor motocross. But at the first round of the AX series in Manchester Whatley failed to turn up and the #227 Husky stayed in the pits ready to rip for the whole day. Later that week it was announced that the pair would split with Whatley signing for Apico Husqvarna shortly afterwards.





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# TONY CAIROLI

THE EIGHT-TIME CHAMP WAXES LYRICAL ABOUT MALAGROTTA – THE TRACK THAT MADE TONY THE MAN HE IS TODAY...

**H**ey folks, how's it going? I'm writing this while sat on the boat that is taking me home from the first race of the Italian championships in Sardinia!

The winter preparations on this beautiful Italian island are done and it's time to return home to get ready for the next race and it's a track that I know quite well – Malagrotta. Have I told you before about this fantastic place? If not I'll do it right now...

Malagrotta is the place where I've done most of my training over the past 14 years! I've been flying there each year since October 2003 in what us Italians call 'Ottobrara Romana'. This is the middle of October when the temperatures are warm and it seems to be springtime instead of autumn. We get long days of sunshine and, if you're lucky enough, you can still go to the sea and take a swim and have fun on the beach!

I had spent the previous two years in northern Italy where the weather conditions are quite different with long, cold and foggy winters and long, humid and hot summers. Malagrotta was my kind of last chance saloon as the previous season had not gone so well for me and I was at a turning point in my career.

Claudio De Carli had been watching me for a while and I knew that his team could be the ideal place for me – closest to Sicily and closest also in what I was used to when I was young. Good temperatures, good food and warm people!

I got the chance to ride the little Yamaha 250

for the first time and I was able to show what I was capable of doing in order to impress Claudio and obtain a place in his team. I also got to ride alongside Claudio Federici who for me was a bit of an idol.

That first time I was focussed on the bike and on the track without knowing that this would become the one place that I would ride at more than anywhere else on earth – including my track at home! So, after a long day spent listening to Claudio's advice and then riding the bike at my best – proving that I could be the rider he was looking for – I did some very good laps, impressing him like I wanted and winning the seat that is still under my ass today!

Of course that seat is a bit different today – wider and longer with the KTM logo on it and on a bike that has more than double the horsepower! Importantly though it's still a seat from a De Carli bike and I'm proud to be in the same structure with almost the same people for the 14th season in a row. I believe that is a kind of record!

For me there is not a better place to do my job in the world than here and that's also the reason I never left to ride in the USA when I had the opportunity to do it. Since that day back in 2003 and all of the years I've ridden Malagrotta, I have learned so much, moving from the Yamaha 250 to the 450, from the KTM 350 to the 250 for the Motocross of Nations in Kegums and then back on the 350 before climbing aboard the big toy that I'm riding today at the GPs – my KTM SX-F 450. I'm starting to love that beast!

After so long testing and training with that bike, the feeling I have on it now is amazing! There is still a lot to do to reach the confidence levels I had with the 350 but now I am starting to feel as one with her, yes, her, because my bike is a little bit like my baby and now finally we know each other a little bit better and we are ready to have fun on all the tracks of the MXGP World Championship and not only in Malagrotta.

So, the start of the season went well at Riola Sardo – another track that I know well and that I like so much. They call this track the 'hell of sand' and there is a reason why! Ruts, bumps and holes can be so big that you and your bike disappear sometimes but if you know how to tame the sand waves then you can have so much fun.

The season debut at the Internazionali d'Italia went pretty well and I won both motos. I also had the joy to ride as I wanted from the first to the last corner after grabbing the holeshots in both races. Let's not forget though that those were only pre-season races and the best is yet to come!

A presto amici inglesi (See you soon my English friends!)



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# BRYAN MACKENZIE

AFTER LEARNING THE ART OF HOW TO BE A GOPHER BRY'S NEXT TASK IS TO GO FOR A LONG STAND...

It seems that I'm busier now than I have ever been in my whole entire life. 'How is that?', you may ask. For a start the Arenacross UK gig that Kawasaki extended my way to take the reins of their Team Green indoor squad has had me touring the country every weekend and I'm on that M6 up and down as much as a 'hoors knickers' – much the same as I was when I was competing a full season of the Maxxis British Championship.

But it's not just a Saturday night shindig for the boys at the edge of the dance floor though. Starting on a Friday afternoon, travelling to the venues and setting up is a long old day for us too. The bit that you guys witness starting from 7:30pm until 11pm is the important end of a long day but we actually start at 7:30am each Saturday morning with pit set up, signing on and the all important smack talk session.

That leads up to the first bikes on track at 10am for free practice and qualifying. Those can be a little bit hectic at times and I watch each session from the stand and run back down to the pits in between to debrief with our guys and give advice where I can, fetch the lap times for their sessions and let them know when they are next out.

I also float about the pit and bench race some more with the mechanics in case I can lend a hand in that department, too, but I'm best at being the gopher – gopher this and gopher that as they say...

In Belfast our Portuguese muscle, Hugo, wanted a part to try on the bike which I hadn't packed as we had already changed off it a couple of weeks ago. So I phoned up a local dealership and drove out and picked it up in between sessions only to

come back having missed his final session when he decided he didn't fancy it on anymore anyway... That was pleasing.

That takes us right into lunch territory when the riders disperse for a bite to eat – usually found congregating at the local Nandos – and the team crew set about the bikes to prepare them again for the big show. Don't get me wrong, it isn't slave labour and we will find a couple of hours in the afternoon to deteriorate our physiques with convenient food but we return back to the pit at around five o'clock to greet the VIP AX guests who get to visit the pit area and a track walk to meet some riders. It's one of my jobs to keep our riders up to speed with those obligations for the series.

Then the night show – that can be madness. There are a lot of time slots to hit especially as I have a guy in every category – 65, Supermini, Lites and Pro AX. As the Pros go through the evening qualifying heats the races they are in are always different and they never race with exactly the same group of people twice in a night so I am always picking up timing sheets and start lists and making sure everyone is racked up when they need to be.

If there is any carnage caused damage that can be a curve ball as well. Time is limited so it's all hands on deck if need be.

That leads us onto the racing itself. For entertainment it's a 10! It literally is completely unpredictable to the point where the only consistency in the Pro class is that it's absolutely mental.

If I had a fiver for every time I've been asked if I'm gutted I'm not out there I'd have at least an 'undred quid. And, if truth be told, I'm not. I get to

every track and think 'this is awesome' and would love to lay the first tyre marks into the perfectly formed dirt but then the thought of riding it with 10 other savages just looking for a inch to punish you is enough to make me prefer my new job role within the arena every time.

Once it's all said and done we tear down quick before another night in a hotel and a long jaunt home on Sunday morning followed by a full Monday shift in the workshop to prepare the steeds for battle again.

And, if that wasn't enough, I work with one of my AX riders – Dylan Woodcock – and my old Husky team-mate, Zander Brown, in the week now as well. Both of these lads are putting on their big boy pants this year and making their Pro MX2 debuts as they move up from MX2.

I'll be working with these two knuckleheads all year so in between AX we've been weather hunters riding wherever the sun shines. This week it shines in Spain. Well, for the most part it does.

Our villa is so far up the side of a mountain we neighbour the International Space Station. We wake up in Scotland – foggy, windy and cold – and hit Spain 3,000 foot directly downhill later on the Lloret de Mar high street.

So I'm still living the dream, a different dream at that and one that I never envisioned for myself but one that I'm still enjoying and finding similar levels of satisfaction that I used to get out of it when I raced myself.

*Bryan Mackenzie*  
#121



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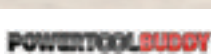
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# STEVE HOLCOMBE



IT'S FULL SPEED AHEAD FOR STEVIE AS HE STARTS GETTING SERIOUS WITH HIS PRE-SEASON TRAINING IN SPAIN...

**M**ake a plan I thought. Head to the Beta factory in Italy, the weather will be better there. So I loaded up, drove 850 miles to the team's base sure that I'd get away from the wet, British weather. No sooner had I arrived, it snowed!

I guess pre-season training is a little like racing – you always have to be ready for the unexpected. Hoping that once I was safely in Italy the weather would be better and I'd be able to start riding immediately, I had to switch things up and find a new plan. Thankfully, my revised schedule's been working out great... apart from a few more wet, rainy days.

Before I went to New Zealand at the end of last year I'd planned to go to Spain with my team-mate Alex Salvini. Before reaching Spain I'd planned to ride close to the Beta factory for a few days to kind of get accustomed to being back on a bike again after my end-of-year break. But with five-to-six inches of snow on the ground the morning after I arrived I was forced to spend three days straight driving for an hour-and-a-half to and from the nearest sand track. As much as I love riding sand, with all the driving it kinda sucked.

So I hit the fast-forward button on my plans, loaded up again – two enduro bikes, trials bike, MTB, a tonne of tyres and all my other stuff – and met Alex in La Bisbal, close to Girona. I've been here for three weeks or so now and it's been

great. The weather's been mixed but we've hit a tonne of different tracks and spent some quality time testing with the team.

After a decent break I'll be honest it does take a little while to get back into the swing of things. At the end of a season you're 100 per cent race fit, completely in tune with your bike and don't need to think about anything much other than twisting the throttle. Getting back on a bike after a break is different. That 'in tune' feeling isn't quite what it was, but that's the whole reason everyone that can starts ramping up the bike time during January and February – to get that feeling back again.

A little time before signing off on 2016 I did some testing with the team in Italy. The idea was simple – while I was feeling good we'd try some new set-up stuff in readiness for 2017. Better than try and do all the testing early in the New Year when I'm a little rusty. We came up with some definite improvements, and got things to where I was even happier with them when the team came to Spain for a few days. Now it's pretty much head down to build by bike fitness.

Close to where we've been staying there's a load of different tracks and a load of Spanish riders to go riding with. As great as it was last year to do a load of riding with Alex in Italy – something I'm planning to do once I'm finished in Spain – it's been cool to have fun riding with guys I'd normally be competing against in world championship events. As much as everyone is serious about

getting fitter and stronger, because we're away from major events it's really laid back. It's fun.

I've not just spent all my time on an enduro bike, I've had some great afternoons and evenings playing on my trialer, too. Getting to spend the day with Jorge Casales, Beta's factory trials guy, was pretty memorable. Just as I start to feel like I'm heading in the right direction with my feet-up riding he quickly made me realise I'm a complete beginner. Watching him bounce, hop and jump from rock to rock was pretty incredible. What those top trials riders can do is, well, a lot better than what I can do. Without wanting to sound like a name dropper I'll hopefully have spent the day with Fujigas by the time you read this. I'm a little bit excited about that.

The coming weeks are going to see me do more of what I've been doing recently – riding. I'm working on a trip to Finland to do some testing and some cold weather acclimatisation but I don't want to focus too much of my riding on that one race. Once I feel like I'm good with things in Spain and Italy then I'll head north.

Ciao for now.

Steve

*Holcomb #70*



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# DANIEL GROVE



**THE 30-YEAR-OLD ENDURO VIRGIN – OH WAIT, IT WAS HIS BIRTHDAY THE OTHER WEEK... THE 31-YEAR-OLD ENDURO VIRGIN FILLS US IN ON HIS OFF-ROAD JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY...**

**A**s you've probably seen over the last couple of issues, ol' Sully bullied me into riding an enduro bike which is actually a huge lie as I was really keen to give it a try and it's been ace! I've raced a few enduros back in the day on a motocross bike however riding this KTM has been an absolute treat as it's built specifically for enduro and not burning laps around a motocross track.

It's meant that I've been able to continue riding throughout the winter while most motocross tracks have been under water which is something that the 350 EXC-F kinda embraces as it's been through a swamp almost deep enough for the silty stream to enter the silencer but KTM HQ don't need to know that do they? It would have been a great photo but at the time that was the last thing on my mind!

If you're thinking of making the switch over to enduro then I'd certainly recommend it. The entry fees are inline with motocross and you get so much more time on the bike. Plus you get to ride some really cool woodland and places that you wouldn't generally get to ride.

If you prefer time on the bike as opposed to waiting around for your race or practice session then it could be time to invest in a bike with lights and some proper enduro gear, as motocross gear tends to rip and snag quite easily on branches and brambles.

I was lucky enough to get my hands on the Fox Legion line of enduro gear but other people that I've rode with recently have worn motocross gear which soaked clings to your skin. On one ride in January it was pretty cold and wet and for my mate Jim it was a long three hours!

Others wore big enduro jackets and in the slower woodland sections they were getting pretty warm which must have been really annoying. I can honestly say that the Fox Legion Downpour jacket keeps me the right

temperature during any ride regardless of conditions. It's expensive but without it I think my love for enduro riding wouldn't be as strong as it is...

Riding enduro through the winter makes a huge difference when it comes to racing motocross in the UK as come March you shouldn't suffer from arm pump which is pretty common during the early part of the season for most people.

Depending on the sort of winter we have you can ride a few motocross tracks but generally – unless you live up north near some sand tracks – riding is out of the question. With enduro though it's kind of anything goes when it comes to the weather as not many events get cancelled.

I've been out when there's been a bit of frost about and although it's not ideal it'll thaw out and then you're away although it can get a bit slushy. On my early days out on the bike down my mate's farm I included some technical bits and thought that I was half decent until I entered a race that featured some rock gardens and log crossings. That's when my ambitions of being the next enduro superstar hit the reality wall.

Since then though I've been lucky enough to ride some private land down in South Wales which has been great and some of it was a real challenge to begin with. It was a bit like if you only ever ride motocross when it's dry and then when you race at a muddy and paddle around for most of the lap. That's how frustrating it was.

Since then though my enduro riding skills have improved somewhat and whenever I go and ride over there I remember sections that I struggled with initially and now the challenge is to not dab or take a more difficult line whereas initially the goal was to not fall off or stall it!

After riding over in South Wales a few times I went back to my mate's farm and rode and felt so much better on the bike. I think initially I was in motocross mode over there and didn't look far enough ahead which is the wrong thing to do while negotiating something challenging like a long deep rut

or the rocky stream that the lap runs through.

Around the whole course that I have there I felt much faster and confident on the bike which I guess happens with anything if you persist and push through the challenging times. The best thing that I've learnt is to ride a gear higher than you think you should as using first or second gear on a 350 KTM won't get you far when it comes to steep climbs as you'll run out of drive quickly.

Second is good for tight woodland work and rocky climbs though. I seem to learn something every time that I ride the 350 which keeps it interesting. Last month I rode an enduro practice day near Stourport and within about half a lap I'd realised just how much I'd learnt and how much my riding style had changed to suit riding the bike and the conditions.

Early on there was a fairly steep climb with riders stopped everywhere but I just looked ahead and stayed up on the pegs and worked my way between everyone steadily and carried on to the top. Had this have been on a motocross track during motocross season I've no doubt that my right elbow would have been down by my knee and I'd have had a few of the guys I was dodging looking at me like I was a right hacker. I think my riding has matured a bit but this is how you have to approach riding enduro.

You definitely can't ride it the same way that you ride motocross as you'll do yourself a mischief in no time and not have the energy needed for a three – or more – hour race or ride. I find that riding tall gears, not revving the engine hard and carrying momentum everywhere means that I can maintain the same pace for the whole ride so with what I've learnt over the last few months I'm going to be putting that to use by entering a few races to see how I fair before the bike moves on to a new owner...

*Daniel Grove*





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# JAKE NICHOLLS

JAKE AND THE CREW HEAD DOWN TO SPAIN FOR A LITTLE PRE-SEASON PREP...

**W**hat's up guys, just back from a busy trip to Spain for some pre-season testing and a bit of a sharpen up. It's nice to be back home to see the wife and dogs – I haven't been away for a while. Seems like I missed the big frost that the south east has copped this January which is always good – that's not to say it was bikini weather down in Spain mind you. Put it this way I was a lot warmer in New Zealand last year but also a lot slower...

This recent trip has made me realise the importance of riding with fast guys every so often and how good it is for so many reasons. If you're going well it gives you confidence which is always nice and hard to come by in the off-season. It's very easy to get false confidence riding around at your home track thinking you're a legend but deep down we all know that it's irrelevant unless you've been out and shown your cards a bit with some fast boys.

And if you're not going well it gives you a chance to learn what others are doing better and put it to work. It's also good for bike set-up as you're pushing so hard to go good your bike reacts as it would in a race meaning so the set-up will be pretty close if you can learn to give feedback while riding that hard – not as easy as it sounds – and also it actually helps get rid of some of the first race nerves and tension before you've even got to the first race of the year.

I must say that I'm feeling good on my orange machine. I had a bit of a head start obviously what with the bike I was on last year being so similar in many ways. I already had quite a decent base when I first got on the bike suspension wise and after riding a 450 for a full year I actually know what I want from the machine now.

Last year we started the first month of the season with a stock bike as I really didn't know what I wanted out of it. So this year we've been able to go to the motor guy and ask for specific things. And I got to try this stuff while I was away, while pushing hard, while either racing other GP riders on the track or playing stop watch wars chasing/matching/beating lap times – so very much a proper test.

I've been trying to go a different way about my riding thanks to the help of Jamie Dobb and it's been going well. Like I said earlier, before we went to Spain I felt I was going well and we were doing the right things but now I know! It's been good to have the whole team down too – I've been rooming with Ben for the two weeks and our two mechanics have been with us.

It's good for me to further develop my working relationship with Paul Keates who is my mechanic but also as a group to be having a laugh. I had such a fun year racing in 2016 and a big part of that was the atmosphere under the awning. I get on really well with Ian the head technician and Shady Shaun who is always on hand to help us all out – Steve Fry as well.

They all came down to Spain for the first week and we started where we left off. After two days I had them all farting as loud as possible in the restaurant at the Red Sands hotel, Justin Morris couldn't resist the fun to and I swear that all the other people there heard us do was cry with laughter.

There were plenty of stitch ups going around too. I got Shady Shaun with the classic lid off the salt shaker trick and sent him down a one way street in the van after I'd seen a police car next to us. He was raging!

Ben and I even managed to drag the old boys out Go Karting one afternoon too which was tremendous. Shady went off first and I followed about 10 seconds back as they love spreading you out so I went straight over the grass and

drilled him as hard as I could and he went spinning off the track waving his arms about...

It was a shame that the Red Sands race they had organised had to be cancelled but man they had about 35 hours of solid rain which just flooded the facility. So as soon as they announced that we packed up and headed three hours north to Justin Morris' set-up he has organised there. It was an upgrade straight away as the house was really nice and a bit warmer than the first hotel.

We rode Bellpuig the first day which was as good as I remember it. They had a chef at this house so we ate like kings, had some rain so one day we got to ride a bit of mud which then turned into ruts and grip. The following day was the same but better and the final day we rode a track that was easily good enough to host a GP.

So it was maybe a blessing in disguise that we got rained off. It would have been nice to have had a race under my belt but it's a long season and it's meant we got a bit more variety of riding in – but all quality. So as it stands now we have the Hawkstone International as our first run out which has a great line up as always. Then we have a couple weeks for some more riding then into the GPs.

I would like to say a big thank you to Roger for sending the team down there for the last couple weeks. Thanks to Ian, Paul, Shady and Steve for all the help and making it a good laugh and for putting up with peewee (Ben) and I. Thanks to Jamie Dobb for organising it and cheers to Justin Morris for having us after all the rain.

If you're thinking of a trip to Spain Justin has it sussed down there with great tracks and accommodation.

Cheers for reading.  
Go hard #45





**2017 Honda CRF 450R**

# RIGHT ROCKET!

**WE FINALLY GET OUR HANDS ON THE 2017 HONDA CRF 450R AND IT'S A RIGHT RUDDY RIPPER...**

Words and photos by **Max Hind/TooFast Media Group**

**F**or a multitude of reasons the 2017 Honda CRF450R has arguably become the most anticipated new motocross bike in recent memory. The fact that Honda have redesigned their 450 – and given it a complete overhaul and makeover – together with their acquisition of Ken Roczen, their current MXGP world title and an earthquake and subsequent tsunami that pushed back production in Japan all formed to become ingredients for the huge hype surrounding this machine.

It seems as though we've been waiting an age to try out this bike and when you consider that KTM and Husqvarna released their 2017 model bikes way back in May/June it seems crazy that we are now only just testing the new Honda. All of that simply heightened the mystery and intrigue surrounding this bike.

After Ryan Houghton double booked himself and we missed our opportunity to take the bike for an initial spin at the global launch in Sardinia, we got lucky on our US trip thanks to Stephen Heighton and Race SoCal motocross vacations we were finally able to try out the highly anticipated new machines. Taking the bull by the horns we gathered a crack team of test riders of varying skill levels at the awesome Lake Elsinore facility in Southern California to decipher whether the all new Honda CRF450R lives up to the hype...

The Honda CRF450R has undergone some major changes, so let's start by talking about those changes and what, in theory, Honda say they are supposed to improve.







## PERFORMANCE

**Downdraft fuel injection:** This is just part of an entire engine overhaul for the 2017 450. The new downdraft intake tract and FI body help and increase both power and fuel-metering precision. According to Honda this is supposed to help in the creation of explosive power and massive torque.

**New cylinder head layout:** The new 450 features an 'in-finger' rocker design. Honda say that their Unicam cylinder head remains the most efficient in the MX world, giving you the design and performance of a double-overhead-cam layout but the compactness of a single-overhead-cam design.

**Higher, 13.5:1 Compression Ratio:** The bike features a new combustion-chamber design with a revised squish area that helps boost the CRF450R's compression to new heights. This means improved combustion efficiency for more power.

## HANDLING

**New Showa Spring Fork:** For 2017 Honda have utilised an all-new conventional 49mm Showa spring fork to help increase the CRF450R's front-suspension precision, handling and feel.

**Next-Gen Aluminium Frame:** This 'next-Gen' twin spar aluminium frame positions the new rear shock's mounting point lower, opening up the air box area and contributing to a lower centre of gravity. The frame geometry also helps improve traction, feeling and steering precision.

**Updated Twin-Silencer Exhaust System:** The CRF450R's dual exhaust system is even more compact for 2017 and positioned closer and lower to the frame's centre to take weight off the rear end and further centralise the mass for improved handling. It also allows for more air flow and that equals added horsepower.



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## ADDITIONAL CHANGES

The 2017 CRF450R comes with an electric-start option (although you'll have to pay extra for that). The bike features a front-brake disc measures a whopping 260mm. You get great brake feel and a wave pattern that cuts down on weight. Honda have also made the switch to a titanium fuel tank which is lighter and stronger. It's also thinner than the previous plastic unit while maintaining the same capacity, freeing up more space and helping to centralize fuel mass.

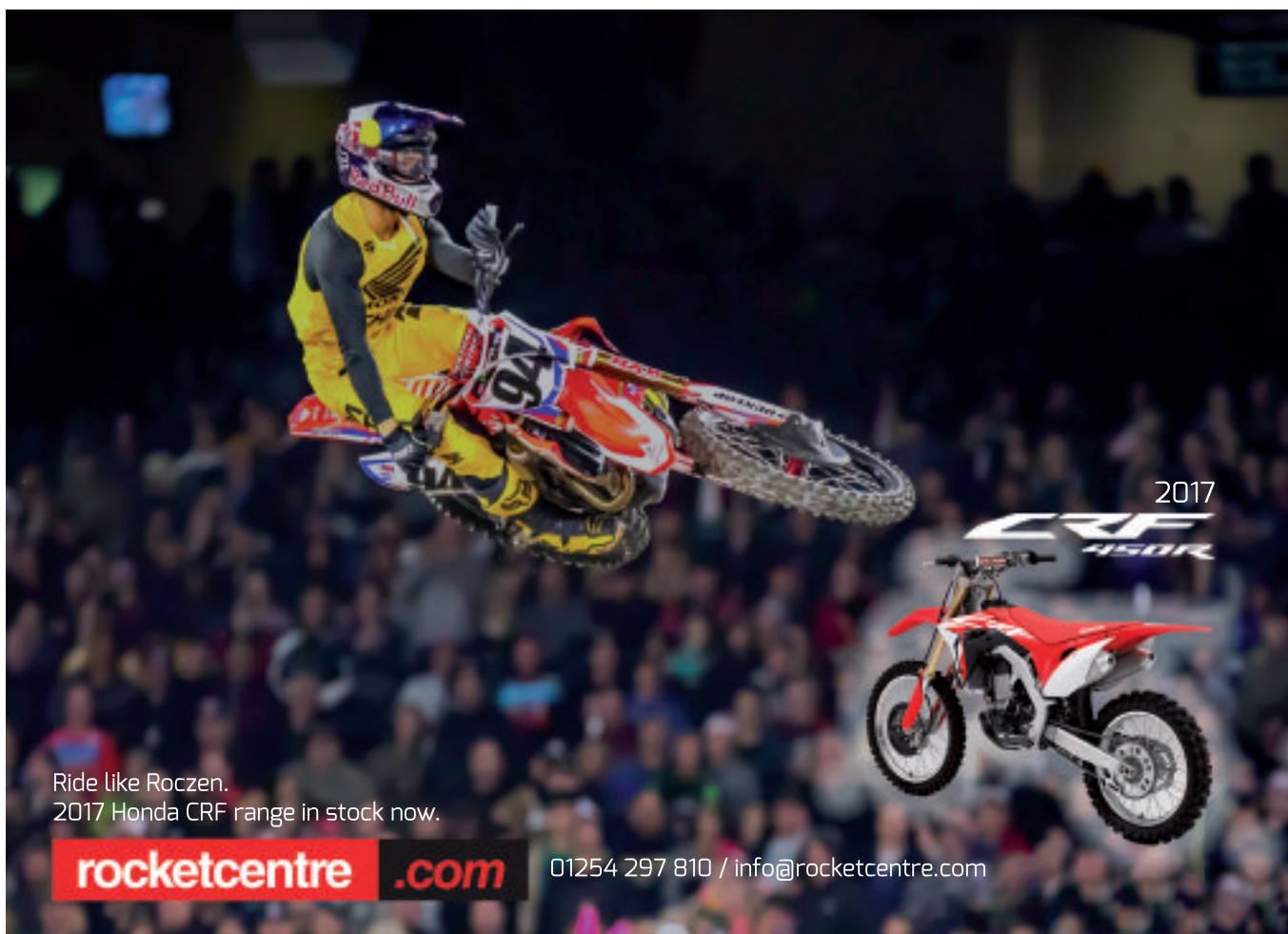
The bike also features a new, more simple handlebar-mounted mapping switch allowing you to choose between standard, smooth and aggressive settings. The graphics are now in moulded for a sleek, fresh aesthetic while the seat is flatter to go in conjunction with the new titanium tank to improve the overall ergonomics of the bike.

So, we've heard all about the big list of changes, additions, and alterations that the new CRF450R boasts. But how does that translate to on-track performance? Well we asked our team of test riders their opinions to find out the answers to the big questions. We've got four guys of different abilities to ensure that everyone has an opinion to relate to.

*Michael Leib takes the new Honda for a spin*







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# MAX HIND AKA TOOFAST MAX

DBR Test Rider, videographer, philanthropist

As soon as you throw your leg over the new CRF450R you can immediately tell that this is an entirely new animal. The bike feels narrow and slender between your legs and sounds throaty and mean as soon as you start her up for the first time. This is a new era of Honda and unlike any CRF450R of the past.

The power delivery is tremendous. You know you have plenty of torque at your disposal but the delivery is silky smooth and very usable – even for a smaller guy like me. The engine seems to pull and pull and pull – there's no discernible drop off in the rev range.

This means that the bike is pretty effortless to ride, the roll on of the power is great and you really feel as though you can keep up your momentum through the turns even checking up and turning tight (which is oh-so easy now) you can squirt on the power and lose no time at all.

Typically, I'm very nervous when riding 450s as I feel too small for them and I usually feel that I'm unable to tame all of that power. However, the 2017 CRF450R inspired a great deal of confidence within me and after a few sessions I felt very comfortable and I could've easily ridden the bike for far longer than I was allowed.

That being said it did take some time for me to find that level of comfort. Unlike a lot of other machines, particularly those of the Austrian variety, I didn't feel comfortable right away on the CRF. I think this is down to the big changes they've made to the overall handling characteristics of the bike. To start with it felt very front end heavy and I had a few big bar wobbles. The handlebars felt a lot higher than what I'm used to and the new tank/seat combo meant that my weight was immediately far further forward than before.

However, after a session or two of growing accustomed to these new characteristics I started to really enjoy and appreciate the changes. The bike did feel very light and nimble and man was it easy to corner. The tank/seat combo allowed you to get forward and turn tighter than ever before.

The suspension felt very plush and workable, the front forks were maybe a little hard but that is easily adjustable. I feel like this is the first Japanese big bike that really does feel like an MX2 machine in terms of handling and rideability.

I just have a couple of nit-picky problems with the 2017 CRF. It's nice to see that Honda do have an electric-start as an option but it's just a bit annoying that it's an extra and not standard. It feels as though they are reluctantly embracing the technology but hopefully in the years to come the electric-start will be fully integrated and come as standard- because god knows I hate trying to kickstart a 450.

The only other tiny little problem I have is the map switch. After seeing what KTM have done and how simple and easy it can be to switch a map it feels like going back in time a bit here with the system Honda employ where you click the button on the handle bar and a light flashes to tell you what map you're in. I much prefer the full display you get on the KTM/Husky. But that's just a tiny little thing that doesn't really affect the overall experience of the CRF450R.

In conclusion, I can see why Honda are so excited about this machine. It's all new for them and a big step in the evolution of the 450cc motocross bike. Easier and more fun to ride while still packing the same punch as the best 450s in the game. That's a winning combination, right?

Former Maxxis contender Stephen Heighton whips it – whips it good!



## STEPHEN HEIGHTON

Former Maxxis contender and owner of Race SoCal

My initial thoughts on the bike were that it feels very different to the '16 model. Everything from the power delivery, to the spring forks to the new shock – it just all feels very different.

The bike has a great planted feel and it seems very light and nimble and that means that it turns really well. It honestly does feel like a 250F in that department, it turns great, it's really flickable, it seems to have a lot of front end grip and it tracks really well through the turns. In terms of the power delivery I was very surprised when I revved it for the first time I thought it sounded very similar to the Yamaha 450. You really hear it sucking in the air through the intake.

Whereas the YZ450F revs on for quite a long time this CRF450R just pulls forever. Once the power kicks in it just keeps going and going and going. It doesn't seem to taper off like the previous model does. You are able to do jumps in second or third gear and the bike is still pulling in the rev range. It's really impressive and I think Honda have done a great job.

"For the suspension they've decided to go back to the spring fork and they've used a 49mm spring. In my opinion it really does feel like the A-kit stuff that I'm used to using. It does seem that the bike is now coming with a factory-based fork that is manufactured for the masses. It doesn't seem to bottom out when landing hard off jumps and in the turns the bike does feel very planted.

Overall I think it's a very impressive bike from what we've seen so far today.







## MICHAEL LEIB

AMA Pro, MX2 qualifying race winner and podium visitor, owner of Canvas MX

It's very cool to see the evolution of the 450 that's going on at the moment. I've been riding 450s here and there for the past four or five years so it's pretty crazy to see how narrow they are becoming and how much they are starting to feel like 250Fs with the power package of a 450.

The 2017 CRF450R is very enjoyable and incredibly easy to ride. The bike feels very balanced. To me the bike does really feel like a 250F in terms of handling, more so than any other 450 I've ridden in the past. They've certainly made some big improvements.

In terms of power, I think it was the '14 or '15 model that really seemed to just sign off as the top end came in, whereas this '17 feels very linear from top to bottom. There doesn't seem to be so much of a peak and a fall off – it just feels like there's a nice smooth transition through the rev range. One thing I always struggled with on a 450 – being a small, lightweight kinda guy – was all the abrupt power. That wasn't something that was necessarily good for me. So, having a 450 with a power package that is a little more linear and broader seems to work a bit better for me.

As far as suspension goes the toss-up

between air and spring forks is a tough one. For me riding supercross I do actually like the air fork, however any time we've tried to get the air fork to work outdoors it's been a big struggle. I mean we've always managed it in the end but it's been difficult to get to that point. I think you can achieve good things with both but I think for the normal guy you are going to be able to find a better, more comfortable setting far easier using the spring fork whereas the air fork would take a bit more time and effort to find that comfortable setting.

Comparing the 2017 CRF450R against the other 450s I would say I prefer the YZ. The only thing I don't like about the Yamaha is how wide it is. And low and behold Honda have actually cured that problem. I've not ridden every 450 but I have ridden the Yamaha, the KTM and the Suzuki. As far as the evolution of the 450 motocross bike goes I think Honda are a little bit ahead of the game at the moment.

Does the bike live up to the hype? I didn't pay too much attention to the hype but it certainly is an enjoyable bike to ride. It's cool to see the 450s go from the big bulky machines they were in the past to what we have now with the CRF. When I first started riding 450s they were too big and heavy and now we have this CRF which is very easy to hop on, cruise around and do things that I would typically do on my 250F.







## ADIE RICE

ACU Expert and international relations expert

I usually ride two-strokes and specifically 125s but I found the new CRF 450R very easy to just jump on, ride and crack on with. Obviously, it's got a lot more power than what I'm used to but the delivery is very smooth and useable and the bike also turns very well. So, with all of that considered I really enjoyed riding the bike and I wasn't expecting that due to being a 125 rider normally. You could definitely jump straight on to this bike from a 125 and be just fine. Overall it's a good machine and a lot better than last year's model.

Michael Leib chucks the fo-fiddy about like it ain't a thing – whatever that actually means of course



## SUMMARY

The general consensus from everyone that had a spin on the 2017 CRF450R was that Honda have made a huge step up from last year's model and they have may just set the standard for an Open Class MX bike. All that's left to do now is put it up against to other brands to see how it stacks up. Shootout time!

## SPECIFICATIONS

### 2017 Honda CRF450R

Bore and Stroke	96mm x 62.1mm
Carburation	Fuel injection
Compression Ratio	13.5:1
Engine Displacement	449.7cc
Brakes Front	260mm hydraulic wave disc
Brakes Rear	240mm hydraulic wave disc
Suspension Front	Showa 49mm coil spring fork (305mm travel)
Suspension Rear	Showa monoshock using Honda Pro-Link system, (314mm axle travel)
Caster Angle	27° 22'
Frame type	Aluminium twin tube
Fuel Tank Capacity	6.3 litres
Ground Clearance	328mm
Seat Height	960mm
Wheelbase	1482mm
Kerb Weight	110.6kg

Our test team compares notes – unfortunately not about the CRF450R but on that hot blonde in the pits...







# TREEME

**WHY STAYING TRUE TO HIS ROOTS HAS LED  
MARC TEISSIER - AND THE SHERCO BRAND -  
TO THE TOP OF THE OFF-ROAD TREE**

Words and photos by Future7Media





# NO DOGS!

**I**f you were a nineties child then there's a strong possibility you will have owned a No Fear t-shirt with the slogan 'It's not the size of dog in the fight, but size of fight in the dog'. Being on the short side of average height I wore mine with pride until the print eventually faded out.

It's now 9.30am of a blustery cold Sunday morning in January 2017 and as I stand in an obscure French quarry prior to the start of the Alestrem Hard Enduro, that slogan pops into my head again.

While taking shelter under Sherco's bright-blue promotional pop-up tent, Marc Teissier – Sherco's founder and owner – is casually leant over a display bike shooting the breeze with a potential customer. It's a rare sight and one I can't quite imagine Mr Sherco being replaced by Mr Honda, Mr Suzuki, Mr BMW or even Mr KTM.

But here we are, just over an hour before the race begins and the head man behind Sherco's landmark 2016 EnduroGP World Championship win is unobtrusively at ground level happily talking bikes with

punters. As I wait my turn to grab his attention I wonder if the prospective buyer even realises exactly who he's talking too.

Founded in 1998, Sherco's rate of success has been rapid but understated. Trials first – that's where Teissier's first love lies – they built a solid customer base thanks to the success on the world stage with guys like Albert Cabestany and of course, Graham Jarvis who also delivered a lot of success in the infamous Scottish Six Days Trial. Once they'd firmly established themselves there, next came enduro. Modest steps, >>





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Aussie Matt Phillips delivered the Sherco brand a world title in 2016

highlighted by Jarvis winning Red Bull Romaniacs for them in 2008, culminated in the 12-year process to becoming 2016 EnduroGP World Champions with Matt Phillips.

For a small, family run company 19 years in existence and selling a total of 6,000 motorcycles annually, it's one heck of an achievement. Taking on and beating Goliaths like KTM is something few predicted would happen pre-season last year. But then again the beauty of unpredictability is why we run races.

As his customer begins to walk away, I step in with a courtesy handshake and chance my arm at asking the boss of Sherco for 20 minutes of his time. Met with a warming smile, his French switches to modest English and with no appointment needed I'm now sat in the passenger seat of his humble Audi out of the elements and talking bikes. No heirs or graces, it feels like simplistic grassroots stuff – the very philosophy I'm about to find out that his world beating company is built on...

**DBR:** Forgive me for maybe stating the obvious here but it's a very rare sight to see the owner and founder of a world

championship winning motorcycle manufacturer chatting with customers on a trade stand in the middle of a frosty-cold French quarry. In a sense it puts into perspective underneath the results just how much of a punch you guys are packing. Would you agree?

**MT:** (laughs) "Yes it's true we are a little company but I feel we're a very dynamic one. Sherco is not a company with outside investment and capital – we're not like that. We're family funded and everything is done in small, calculated steps. We all get our hands dirty when needed. We originally started with trials, and when we added enduro we pushed steadily to understand that world too.

"Now, after 12 years, we're world champions and I think that's a good step. When you see the competition we face – KTM, Husqvarna, Yamaha, Honda, Beta – it shows we can hold our own. I think that's a strong statement to make."

**DBR:** Sherco returns from the Dakar Rally with another stage win and strong showing. Although obviously competitive, why race Dakar? Is it for the publicity or development or success? >>

“ We have all the technology for two-stroke fuel injection . . . The bike is ready . . . we are ready but it is not yet necessary to put it on the market. ”





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“The hobby guy’s Sunday is for fun... he juggles it with family life and if he can’t have fun then the sport is no good.”



**MT:** “For us rally has been a necessary step to take. All forms of competition is a good laboratory to test in and understand the engine and motorcycle. Dakar is the biggest testing ground of all. We used this year’s race as part of the development of the 450 and a new cylinder head – we tested many things in this Dakar. Yes, we won a stage too but overall we’re happy for the end result because we only used one engine for the race. And that has been one of the most positive things.”

**DBR:** How big is Sherco and what is the company’s current business strategy?

**MT:** “We are not so big but like I said we are dynamic. Our total sales figures are 6,000

units, trial and enduro combined. But there is possibility to increase. This is what we’ve been working on. We are pushing to increase our global distribution. We are opening to new markets – Australia, South America, North America – while also improving our existing sales too.

“We are now reaching the end of what will be our biggest expansion phase and that is having a complete range of motorcycles for the consumer to choose from. We launched our new 125cc two-stroke at the EICMA show in Milan last November and in a few months time it will be ready for market. Then we’re complete. It’s been a big investment to make – three models in both two-stroke and four-stroke

enduro plus three models in trials – but we are now almost finished the process and it will be a good job.”

**DBR:** Your heart and Sherco’s heart is very much in trials. But it also seems to be a sport in decline, especially at world championship level. For 2017 we have a new promoter and shakeup of the series, what advice would you offer on taking the sport forward?

**MT:** “I believe you need to remember the original roots of the sport. For me world trials competition is currently not a good promotion tool to sell my motorcycle and to sell the business. It’s too elitist. The level is now so high that it’s become difficult for the public >>





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to identify the sport with what guys like Toni Bou and Albert Cabestany are doing.

"I think the new promoter wants to make a big show. But for me it's important not to confuse sport with show – it's also the same for extreme and enduro. Trials and extreme enduro are at the same sort of risk. In extreme there are currently many riders competing but in 10 years time if we keep making the rocks so big that only three people in the world can ride them then people will say it's no good.

"I understand what people mean when they say 'look at F1 or MotoGP'. But F1 or MotoGP is only a laboratory or showcase for the pinnacle of the motor vehicle industry. There are just 20 motorcycles or cars on the track and all of them are prototypes. They are not available to the public – you can't buy a F1 car to make sport at the weekend.

"In trials we race the bike we sell so for me it's important that the normal guy can make at least 85 per cent of the race. Okay, the final 10 to 15 per cent maybe a dream or aspiration but it may also be potentially possible. I've spoken a lot with the promoters of EnduroGP and the FIM about this. I tell them 'be careful, be careful'. For me it is necessary to pull back with trials and kill the high, high level, so the public can identify with the sport again."

**DBR:** Similarly to trials, enduro is undergoing many changes for 2017. Now streamlined to two classes, where do you stand on it?

**MT:** "We are seeing many changes in EnduroGP. Some good, some not so good. It's in a difficult period. With two classes for 2017 costs haven't massively changed. The good riders have become more expensive maybe. Before we had six riders, now only two, but we still spend the same money to be sure of the best riders. I don't know yet if it will be good for the sport. We >>







“

It's been a big investment to make — three models in both two-stroke and four-stroke enduro plus three models in trials . . .

”





Marc Tessier is the man behind the Sherco brand



had world champions in Enduro 1, Enduro 2, Enduro 3 and EnduroGP, now it's only Enduro2 and EnduroGP. We have six enduro bikes and only two classes to race them in.

"There are other complexities too. Since money has come into the sport it's now a business. We have a promoter to run the championship and of course he has to make money too. But now we have to pay to park in the paddock, pay if you want to put up a tent for promotion, pay if you want to sell a sandwich. Making a third party video is also impossible. Like I said, we're not F1 or MotoGP – enduro and trial is small and there isn't enough space to make it too professional. That's not how this sport works."

**DBR:** What is your philosophy on how the sport works?

**MT:** "My philosophy is that this sport is for the people by the people. It is the life of the rider, the sport, the factory, the motor club. If we become too elitist we are then trying to run a race for three riders and not 300 and this is no good."

"Like today at the Alestrem Extreme Enduro. We have 450 riders, including some of the best riders in the world here. That is fantastic to see. But we must also remember the race is for the majority – for the hobby guy. If the first lap is impossible, then the hobby guy goes home disappointed. He may not come back. They are the bloodline of our sport. They work all week and just want to play on their bike with their friends for one day. His Sunday is for fun. It's a hobby he juggles with family life and if he can't have fun then it is no good."

**DBR:** About three years ago Sherco released a video of their two-stroke fuel injection. Since then you've been quiet about it and now it looks like KTM will be the first to bring their system to market this year. When will you move to fuel injection?

**MT:** "Initially we were afraid of the EU homologation so that's why we began to develop the fuel injection system for two strokes. But we also worked to find ways to keep the system we have and are now able to pass the Euro 4 homologation with the carburettor. And for me that is better. Carburetion is the two-stroke mentality. It has simplicity and ease of use and maintenance for the customer with less cost. Fuel injection will add an extra cost on the bike."

"I don't see the need to rush things right now. I feel we made that mistake by being the first four-stroke fuel injected bike on the off road market. It was all very new then and the customer was afraid of the changes. So this is why we wait a little. We have all the technology for the four-stroke and now also for the two-stroke fuel injection but we wait. The bike is ready, the system is ready and we are ready but it is not yet necessary to put it on the market."

**DBR:** What are your thoughts on these European Union emission laws – are they too black and white without taking into account minorities like enduro or trials?

**MT:** "Politics doesn't allow for discussion. Our voice isn't heard and while they are pushing for cleaner air and emissions their decisions are stupid for minorities like us. We sell 6,000 bikes, enduro is tiny and companies like easyJet or Ryanair make more contamination with one flight than we will in a year. But I suppose this is the way it is."

**DBR:** And the future goals – what's next?

**MT:** "Next step? That is to finish the job. This year we will have all models so we want to make a good job with that before trying new things."





# 6000 TO GO!

**AFTER SITTING OUT LAST SUMMER AND THEN JUMPING SHIP FROM HIS NEW TEAM BEFORE THE SEASON'S EVEN STARTED, FORMER BRITISH CHAMPION KRISTIAN WHATLEY'S FINALLY GOT HIS HOUSE IN ORDER...**

Words by Sean Lawless

**K**ristian Whatley is in a good place. After the stresses and strains of the last six months that saw him sit out the summer – and then join and leave a new team without turning a wheel in competition – the 27-year-old is bursting with enthusiasm, brimming with confidence and can't wait to get the season under way.

It's fair to say that 2016 wasn't the best for Kristian, a rider who's without doubt one of the most outrageous talents this country's produced in decades. Complicated personal problems forced him to step away from racing in the middle of 2016 and then, just when he looked like he'd got everything under control,

he did a flit from his new ride with the MVR-D Husqvarna team.

Both Kristian and MVR-D boss Mark Chamberlain have maintained a dignified silence over the split, refusing to comment further following this brief release...

'It is with regret that MVR-D Husqvarna has split with rider Kristian Whatley. The team and rider had differences of opinions that could not be overcome and decided that it was better to go their separate ways.'

We spoke a week before news broke of his new deal with Apico Husqvarna. January's just about the worst time to find yourself without a ride but the ease with which he left one team and walked straight into a deal with

another speaks volumes about how highly he's regarded within the industry.

"I'm definitely going with the Apico Husqvarna team and that's pretty cool," he says after breaking off from cooking dinner to chat. "David Edwards [Husqvarna UK Brand Manager] wanted to keep me on a Husqvarna because I'm one of their top riders and I'm happy to stay as well.

"I really love the bike and am riding it really good. I feel like I'm back to the form I had on the Embo Yamaha – it feels like it's flowing again so hopefully everything's coming together.

"So I had a meeting with Dave – we had a Costa – and went over a few things and

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Despite gelling well with the new bike Kristian and the MVR-D team parted ways soon after this shot was taken...



got them out the way. No, I didn't have a pumpkin spice, I'm not about that – I'm a hot chocolate man!"

After two seasons of stability – well, a season-and-a-half – riding a Buildbase Honda for Dave Thorpe he's now on his second team in the space of just a few weeks.

"Nothing's ever simple in my life – I'm like Dennis the Menace – but I've got my head down, I'm training hard, I feel like I'm riding really good. You know when you're riding good and you're in the flow. I haven't felt like I've been in the flow for a few years now and it feels good to have it back. I'm re-energised and re-motivated."

Fortunately, he'd already got some saddle time in on the FC 450 he'll race this season before switching teams so knew the bike suited him but, even so, it's still a last-minute complication he could have done without.

"We've had to be on the ball. We've got organised and everything's in place and I'm really happy to be with Apico Husqvarna. Richard Clarke's helping me out as well with CNC Doors. I'm really grateful for the ride and everything that's being put into place at such short notice."

"I've also spoken with Steve Payne at Multitek and he's willing to do some suspension for me and help me out throughout the year. I really get on well with Steve and for me he's the best technician in England – I don't think there's anyone better than him. He knows what I like, he knows what I want, straight away he can get a good base setting for the bike."

The son of '80s hero Jem Whatley, another brilliant but complicated rider, Kristian understandably doesn't want to talk too much about the second-half of 2016. He'd started the year playing catch-up after sustaining a pre-season foot injury practising at Dunkirk but quickly made up ground and by mid-July he was back on the Maxxis podium.

Then suddenly he simply disappeared off the radar...

"I had a proper meltdown, it was bad. I don't even like thinking about it. I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy and I was very fortunate to have Dave Thorpe's support, for sure. But it is what it is and all I can do is look forward."





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We all have personal problems from time to time but I can't think of any other racer who would walk away from one of the most professional teams in the country – while still fifth in the Maxxis championship and just a handful of points from third – only a couple of weeks after posting his best finish of the year.

I put this to Kristian and ask whether he thinks that he's his father's son in more ways than simply being a tremendously gifted rider...

"I'd say I am probably a little bit like my old man, complex. It's probably in the genes, y'know. I've spoken to him little bits and bobs [about what went on last year] but I don't really speak to him too much. He gets on with what he's got to do and I get on with what I've got to do.

"I'm Oxford-based and he's in Bournemouth so I don't see too much of him. I'm doing my job and he's doing his. I don't know – maybe we're too similar? He tells me he was the same with his old man. But it is what it is and I ain't going to grumble."

There's no getting away from the sense of optimism that Kristian's exuding at the moment. His personal life's on an even keel, he's racing a bike he loves and he has high hopes that he's found a team that will give him everything he needs to replicate the form he enjoyed in 2013 when he won the Maxxis title for Emberson Yamaha and then finished second the following season behind Shaun Simpson.

"They [Apico Husqvarna] sound really easy-going which suits me. I've always been the sort of person who needs to be given some rope. If you're on my back all the time I don't like it. I'm easy-going, I'm not hard work. I'm very laidback and if you're in my way and making me stressed then I won't go well."

Injuries dogged the two seasons he spent with Buildbase Honda but Kristian's adamant that he enjoyed riding for DT and that, although the results didn't really come for him in the Maxxis series, the time he spent riding red was beneficial.

"Riding for Buildbase Honda was very good for me. It's a very well-run, professional team and I won them a couple of championships and got some great publicity. It was good for me and it was good for them as well and I'm grateful for the opportunities that came my way because of it.

"It's just I don't think the bike really suited me too well but, then again, I'm a man that rides a bike really low on the back – I ride a lot different to everyone else, I'm a bit more old-school."

The only time the conversation falters slightly is when I ask Kristian if he ever worries that 2013 – when he won the 'triple crown' of Maxxis, MX Nationals and British Masters titles – is as good as it's going to get for him.

There's a pause in his constant chatter while he mulls this over – the silence pretty much providing the answer as he contemplates how to reply to a question he's obviously never >>



Kristian's ridden a few different brands over the years...







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Kristian scored a fill-in ride with the factory Yamaha team at the British GP a few years back



Whatley and the MBO Yamaha were more or less unstoppable

asked himself. When he does finally speak he's unequivocal in his response.

"Absolutely never! A racer never thinks that. I'm not thinking that, I never think that. Would Brad Anderson think that? No! You have your good years and your bad years – Stefan Everts says that. Every year can't be good. The team, the set-up, what products you're using, the tyres – everything's got to come together.

"There's plenty more to come from me. Definitely. I've got an old head on young shoulders sometimes and then sometimes it can be the other way around but I think I've grown up a lot more in the last two or three years and I think people will see a different person in 2017."

Kristian will make his debut for Apico Husqvarna at the opening round of the Michelin MX Nationals at FatCat on March 5 and in the run-up will be flat-out training and testing. His change of machinery puts him at a disadvantage compared to his three main rivals for the major domestic titles but with his confidence running high he's not stressing.

"I think it's going to be between me, Tommy [Searle], Jake [Nicholls] and Graeme [Irwin] this year. Definitely. We're all going to be on the pace. A lot of the boys have already had at least a year on their bikes so they're a little bit of a step ahead of me but that's all right as long as I keep knuckling down and get the settings I like on the bike.

"So I've got more work to do but I feel fresh and ready for it. I can't wait for it." >>







# INDOOR ACTION!

## NEVER SAY NEVER...

Kristian's departure from the MVR-D Husqvarna team was only made public after he failed to show up in Manchester for the opening round of the 2017 Arenacross Tour.

He raced the 2014 AX championship and showed off some impressive indoor skills to end the series fifth with podiums in Belfast and Birmingham. While he appears to be genuinely disappointed to miss this year's tour, not having to concentrate on indoor settings has freed up a lot of time to prepare for the outdoor season.

"I would have liked to have done it but it is what it is. At the end of the day it's made me kind of knuckle down for the motocross a bit more because I haven't got my mind on the arenacross as well at the same time."

And don't rule out a return to AX action...

"If I come and do it next year then I want to be prepared to do it. I didn't feel very prepared coming into it. One year for sure I want to come in after doing two or three months riding it and spank the French!

"That's what I want to do – not go in half-hearted and just ride around and grab the money. I'm not about that at all. I want to go in and spank them because no-one else is doing it. Adam Chatfield is the closest man. It works for him. He likes it, he's dialled in and he does well."





Another disadvantage, that could possibly become increasingly clear as the season progresses, will be the GP time Searle and Nicholls log which more often than not results in extra speed as the world championship series progresses.

"I've always wanted to have a go at GPs and give it a full good year. The boys that have been ahead of me are GP guys – they're racing faster riders all the time. All I've ever done is riding in Britain and I've never gone any further y'know.

"I've never stretched myself out to go and ride with quicker boys and obviously Jake and Tommy have been brought on with the GP boys for the last 10 years or for however long Tommy's been doing it for. It's that little bit that I'm missing that you maybe don't notice when you are doing GPs."

Kristian, however, has a plan in place that could partly cancel out any advantage Jake and Tommy gain from lining up against some of the best riders in the world.

"I'm going to try and ride somewhere else – possibly some of the Dutch rounds. I've always wanted to do the French championship too. It would be a bit of an eye-opener. I don't know the tracks and I don't know many of the riders but it would be good for me to race it."

The domestic scene without Kristian was a poorer place at the back end of 2016. Even at less than 100 per cent he's got style dripping from his fingers. Sure, compared to other riders his own personal jigsaw puzzle possibly has more pieces to put together – and sometimes it appears as though he's lost the lid with the finished picture on it – but when everything clicks into place and he's in the flow he's as fast as anyone in the UK.

"I'm a perfectionist really. Some times it's good, sometimes it's not. My brain's always so active. When I go to bed at night I can't sleep but I'm not a person who needs much sleep. Riding's probably the only time that my mind does clear because I'm free of the world – there are no thoughts.

"I'm going out to win the British championship this year – I feel that good and I feel that positive and motivated y'know. I've got a lot of people to prove wrong so I'm going to come out all guns blazing. I can't wait for it to start. I've never been so eager to start."





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# Project

THERE'S BEEN NO LET-UP OVER THE LAST MONTH FOR DBR PROJECT PILOT JOE CADWALLADER WHO'S BEEN BANGING OUT THE LAPS IN FRANCE AND SPAIN...

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Nuno Laranjeira

**W**ith the new season rapidly approaching there's been no rest for our DBR Project pilot Joe Cadwallader who's been putting in the laps – and the road miles – as he prepares for his 2017 campaign.

Joe's been abroad for most of the month with the RMJ Academy, heading first to the South of France before moving into Spain on the hunt for prime tracks and good weather.

"France and Spain were great for me," says the 17-year-old. "We've ridden a mixture of hardpack and sand tracks and put in some seriously hard training – there's been a lot of time on the bike."

Joe was brought into the RMJ Academy at short-notice last year so this is his first off-season of training with Richard-Mike Jones and the team. It's been a tough few months but he's conscious of the benefits of all the hard work.

"I'm feeling very strong now on the bike and in the gym. There's no comparison to where I was this time last year. I can do 35-minute motos around a rough track and normally I'd be hanging after 15 minutes so there's definitely a big improvement on bike fitness."

The team is opting for a different approach this year with Joe's 2017 FC 250 Husqvarna UK machine and with the opening round of the Michelin MX Nationals – where he starts as one of the favourites in the MX2 class – less than a month away there's still work to be done.

"We're going for a slightly detuned bike this time. It's going to be not far off from standard with just a pipe. Last year we felt the bike was very fast and as standard it already has enough power and the pipe will give it a nice edge. I seemed to ride my practice bike a lot better when it had less power."

"We're running stock suspension at the moment but we're expecting some WP stuff to come at the start of the month. I think we're going over to Holland to do some suspension testing to get it right."

It hasn't been all plain-sailing for Joe and his Euro trip has suffered a couple of setbacks, beginning when his van was broken into at a fuel station in Spain.

"I got all my clothes nicked, all our cash, all forms of ID. They got in the back but fortunately they didn't touch the bikes. Then the Redsand International which I was going to race was cancelled because the track was under water but, fortunately, the rain had no effect on the training until right at the end of our stay."

Rich-Mike is happy with Joe's progress. "He's getting on well," he said. "His bike fitness is better than ever and we're now working on speed and intensity. Everything's going to plan. There's still a month of hard work to do but he's on track and in better form than he's ever been in."

With the base level fitness work completed, building speed and intensity into the training programme is essential.

"When we're working on base level fitness it's

about long motos, now we're doing more sprint laps and playing cat and mouse where the riders who are fastest when we do a qualifying session start at the back and chase everyone else. We also do shortened motos to keep it fun and raise the intensity and the pressure."

"When we're building fitness in November and December the riders aren't fit enough to ride qualifying laps for a full moto. So we just build up until eventually they can nearly hold almost a qualifying pace for a full moto which takes a few months to get to."

Following a structured programme alongside the other RMJ Academy members is hugely beneficial for Joe and the rest of the riders.

"Riding with a group of fast riders is a big advantage," adds Rich-Mike. "When we do qualifying, when we do motos and particularly when we do cat and mouse or sprint races against each other I'll always handicap it. So if the duration is five laps and someone was two-seconds-a-lap quicker they'd set off 10 seconds behind."

"Theoretically they should cross the line at the same time so then it comes down to who can handle the pressure better which obviously is important on race day."

**DBR will be following Joe and the RMJ Academy Husqvarna every month so stay tuned for further updates...**







# BOG- TROTTER!

**DAN MAKES LIKE PEPPA PIG AND FINDS SOME MUDDY PUDDLES TO JUMP INTO...**

Words and photos by **Dan Grove** and **Max Hind**

I signed off last month after I'd completed my first enduro on the KTM EXC-F 350 and landed it on the podium! Unfortunately, I haven't found any other races to take part in since but I have some others planned for the spring which I'm really looking forward to. The lack of racing hasn't stopped me getting busy in the workshop though and I've supplied some of the Powerparts that KTM supplied me with.

As mentioned last month some preventative maintenance was in order to prevent any breakages and up first in this department was the fitting of a sump guard and front brake disc guard.

The sump guard was a lightweight plastic one with rubber strips that featured raised sections to cushion it against the frame and ensure that it wouldn't scratch it when it gets water and dirt in

there. The also helps it grip the frame and makes sure it sits solid.

The KTM frame has pre-drilled threaded holes on the rails with bolts already in so it's a case of removing these bolts and then clipping the guard onto the rear section of the frame, installing some sump foam to keep the mud and rocks out and then connecting the guard using two new longer bolts that are supplied with the kit. Simple.

The same can be said for the front disc guard which is also a doddle to fit. However, before I installed it I noticed that there was some water sitting between the wheel bearing and the outer seal in the hub so I carefully removed the seals on both sides, then cleaned and dried everything out before re-installing the seals and working some grease into the gap between the two so that water can't get in there again.

For installing the front disc guard you just need to use a drop of Loctite 242 on the bolts for attaching the guard onto the fitting kit and with the wheel removed, remove the spacer on the disc side and slide the fitting kit that has an integrated spacer into the hub and then re-install the wheel. You should hold the guard while tightening up the axle so that it doesn't spin round and rub on the caliper but apart from that it's a pretty simple installation.

I was also supplied with a seat cover that featured a section of five slightly raised orange strips that are in the perfect place for riders with long legs like me. Plus it came already installed onto a base which meant it was just a case of swapping out the stock seat with the new one which was great. Your local motocross shop can help with installing a seat cover though or if you



have access to a staple gun it's not too difficult.

My next ride out with these parts installed was a little bit special and it took place on some private land in South Wales and I'd say that this was the first proper test for the bike. I mean, I got it stuck in bog at one point! I was lucky enough to be invited down by a friend of a friend and the ride took in a bit of everything with gravelly fire roads, really long steep banks and some really dense trails through some woodland where I had to select full beam on the headlight so that I could see where I was going – or more importantly where the trees were!

Across some of the grassy fields that we rode it was really obvious that the rear tyre was no good on this type of going. On the gravel sections of the ride it was fine but when you wanted some stability across fast wet fields it was really sketchy and I had to back off a little bit to maintain control. To be fair the tyre got quite worn at the enduro that I raced because of the stony stubble fields so if it was new it might not have been that bad. The stock front tyre continued to impress though in all conditions.

Regardless, I'll be on the lookout for a decent set of tyres by next month that are enduro specific and not road legal (as I don't ride on roads) so there should be drastic improvement in grip on my next ride.

After seeing some photos from the enduro

I raced I noticed how low my elbows were so I rolled the handlebars back in the clamps and dropped the clutch and front brake levers. Instantly the bike felt much more comfortable – although I felt fine on it previously – so it just goes to show that you should work on fine tuning every part of your bike for you.

The parts that I installed were a wise investment as some of the trails had seen years of use so there were plenty of tree roots to negotiate and if you didn't carry enough momentum it was easy to find yourself stuck. It was definitely a worthwhile bit of planning to install the disc and sump guard.

As expected, the KTM Powerparts seat cover provided a lot more grip compared to the standard cover – especially when it was wet. However, for the conditions that the UK throws at us during winter it's a worthwhile investment in getting a decent seat cover that will work in all conditions.

I also had a set of Twin Air radiator sleeves supplied by POA Racing that are designed to prevent sand, mud or grass from clogging up the radiator louvres. On all my previous rides grass had built up in front of the radiators and although there were no issues with overheating, grass isn't meant to be kept in there.

As you can see from the photos these worked brilliantly and air could flow freely through the radiator throughout the ride. With that in mind

I'd put these down as an essential item for all enduro bikes as there's seems to be a lot of grass involved from my experiences so far. Even if you aren't racing, I found that the radiators caught a lot of grass off my own front wheel and these prevent that from happening which saves time during pit stops and avoids the risk of your bike getting too hot.

After this ride I found a small design flaw with the KTM. If you look at the photo, you can see that dirty water has been reaching the air filter which isn't ideal. I think I've found a cure for this so I'll report back next month after I've been out riding again so that I can share this on to any owners or potential owners. It's a bit of a shame as the 2017 KTM EXC-F 350 features a redesigned airbox...

Speaking of the air filter, it's a doddle to change on this bike – and all KTMs – as part of the side panel can be removed by hand as it's secured by two pins moulded into it and then the filter is held securely in place by two locating pins so filter changes take no time at all.

Next month I'll update you on this and a few more parts that I've been lucky enough to get my hands on from the KTM Powerparts catalogue as well as equipping the bike with a new set of tyres where the rear is definitely needed so I'm looking forward to trying out the new components and getting some more time in on the bike.





# CLEAN MACHINE!

## M16 EXTREME PUT THROUGH ITS PACES

As you may have seen in a previous issue of this very magazine, there's nothing I like better than washing my bike after a day out riding. Sadly for M16 Extreme they supplied me with their range of cleaning products just after that issue hit the shelves but I've been using it on the DBR long-termer KTM 350 EXC-F with great results ever since.

M16 Extreme promote their cleaning products using a Podium Stage System tagline. The Podium Stage System itself consists of three products – Bike Cleaner (self explanatory), Pro Finish (sprayed on after washing) and their Helmet and Bike Guard (sprayed on to prevent mud sticking to anything that you spray it on).

Starting with the bike cleaner, it's totally safe on all parts of your bike including anodised parts so there's no need to be concerned about using a new name on the bike washing scene as I've used this a lot and I've had no issues with it.

It also comes in a decent trigger bottle which sounds odd but in the past I've found that some other brands bottles don't seem to work very well which causes a bit of frustration.

It's also scented although I can't put my finger on which one I have although it's sold with three different fragrances which vary depending on the batch which are Cherry Bomb, Bubblegum or Blueberry Blast. Mine smells a little bit like Marzipan so perhaps it was a Christmas special...

After scraping and blasting the dirt off the bike as you normally would, I apply the cleaner with the nozzle set so that it's more of a misty spray rather than a solid squirt so that it spreads

out evenly on the bike and then let it soak in for a couple of minutes while I wash my boots off.

I always use a sponge and a couple of different brushes to agitate the dirt all over the bike and as it lathers up nicely you don't miss any parts of the bike. The cleaner is fully biodegradable so for those sensitive about the environment – which should be all of us – can happily use the M16 Extreme Bike Cleaner wherever they like, as can anyone else for that matter.

After the bike is clean it's important to get the bike dry and I used a couple of microfibre cloths that M16 Extreme also supply and then I applied their Pro Finish to all the plastics on the top side, handguards, handlebars (not the grips) and also the hubs as mud doesn't build up much if at all in these areas.

I then use a dry microfibre cloth to buff the Pro Finish and this really does give the bike a gleaming finish. It covers up any scratches in the plastics and graphics which there are plenty of on the DBR long-termer KTM because of the nature of the riding that I've been doing. I've been riding past low tree branches that have rubbed along the side of the bike that make the bike look well used before the bikes been washed and prepped using the M16 products.

I then use the Helmet and Bike Guard on the underside of the mudguards, engine and exhaust, rims, forks and fork guards, tyres and sump guard. The reason for this is that these are the areas where you will get a lot of mud build up or areas where mud can burn into the exhaust and the ignition/clutch cover.

I spray it on and leave it under the mudguards and on the tyres however on the other areas I use a dry microfibre cloth to work it into the surface ensuring that everything is covered and it will leave a strong and clear non-sticky film that dirt can't penetrate.

This makes the next clean up job a lot easier

and therefore much quicker after using this product as it basically acts as a barrier between the bike and the dirt so when pressure washing the next time it's dirty the mud just seemingly falls off.

I've been using the Podium Stage System from M16 Extreme for a few months now and I've been really impressed with how well it works as a cleaning kit. The very same kit that I've been using can be purchased on their website – [m16extreme.com](http://m16extreme.com) – or you may find it in your local dealer where you can find the full range on their shelves.

## M16

Extreme Bike Clean £8.13

Pro Finish £12

Helmet & Bike Guard £13.50

Supplier: [m16extreme.com](http://m16extreme.com)

Contact: 01666 817577



# NEW THREADS!

## LEATT 5.5 RACEWEAR REVIEWED

As I've stated many times in this publication I (that's Max Hind talking y'all – Sutty) am a big fan of Leatt and how they continuously try to push the boundaries in terms of the safety aspect of our sport. It started with the neck brace and over the years Leatt have produced an entire range of protective products.

Earlier this year Leatt unveiled their new helmet and it only seemed like a matter of time before they completed the collection and released their very own riding gear. And here we have it, the Leatt GPX 5.5 jersey and pant.

As you'd expect from Leatt this stuff is innovative in its own right. The 5.5 jersey utilizes an ultra-light four-way stretch MoistureCool wicking mesh fabric. It has brush guard fabric protection over the elbows and tape bonded seams that provide maximum comfort while retaining critical reinforcement with a bar task stitch. The collar has been designed to be used with or without a neck brace, the jersey utilises an athletic stretch fit as well as having laser cut ventilation and a silicone printed tail to connect and grip to the pants.

The pants are tailored, pre-curved slim fit pants with laser-cut ventilation. Over 75 per cent of the pant is made using super lightweight, ventilated diamond stretch material. The pant features I.K.S – Internal Knee Brace System – that protects your pants and bike from knee brace wear.

As well as this the pant features a 3D moulded, fully floating knee cap reinforcement. We have

a heavy duty seat material and a NanoGrip inner leg. A YKK zipper stops the zip from falling down mid ride and a new shorter micro adjuster waist belt with 360 degree silicone grip with side belt adjusters further prevents this fall down.

When wearing the gear for the first time you really notice the high-end quality of the materials used. The tight, athletic fit of the jersey looks damn cool and fits in with the trend that the kids are into these days. However I did find that this tight fit made it a little more difficult to wear body armour underneath the jersey. It still feels very comfortable though and very light and very breezy on the track. I really like how the collar works with – and stretches around – the neck brace easily.

At first I thought the pants were way too big and baggy (the opposite of the super tight fitting jersey) then I realised that I hadn't adjusted the side belt adjusters accordingly. Once I fixed those I had a perfect fit. I really dig the little details that Leatt have thought about, such as the small piece of Velcro that prevents the zipper from falling down and the silicon tail that has been designed to grip the pant and stop the jersey from being untucked. The pants fit really well around my big bulky knee braces and so far the IKS has worked a treat and prevented any major wear or tear.

The 5.5 gear comes in a range cool and striking colour ways that in my opinion look pretty sick. Leatt were pumped to unveil this new kit and that's understandable. The 5.5 range is top notch.

## LEATT

Leatt 5.5 pants £140

Leatt 5.5 jersey £59

Leatt 5.5 gloves £53

Supplier: [apico.co.uk](http://apico.co.uk)

Contact: 01282 473190





# WINTER WARMER!

**ALTHOUGH THE DATE HAS MOVED AROUND DURING THE PAST 40 YEARS HAWKSTONE PARK HAS SERVED UP A REAL TASTY MID-WINTER TREAT - JACK BURNICLE INVESTIGATES HOW IT ALL CAME ABOUT AND WHO THE WINNERS HAVE BEEN OVER THE PAST FOUR DECADES...**

Words and photos by Jack Burnicle

2017 marks the 40th anniversary of an event that eventually triggered the annual Hawkstone Park International Motocross. Originally launched to coincide as closely with New Year's Day as a weekend date allowed, it started life as the 'Kawasaki Challenge 250cc Trophy Race' on January 2, 1977 but whose idea was this insanity?

The Salop Motor Club had for 25 years hosted British GPs, major nationals and even winter television scrambles at Hawkstone Park. Later in 1977 they would organise the first of five 250GPs across the next seven years. So they hardly needed the extra work!

Club chairman and race director Dave Williams claims it came about during a conversation with legendary Salop secretary, the late Tony Johnson. Now Williams seems a perfectly rational man (though it must be said that Tony always exuded a mischievous air!). "We thought New Year's Day, there's nothing on. People might fancy a thrash round Hawkstone," David grins impishly. A thrash round Hawkstone? After celebrating New Year? Were these men mad? "Well, we were rooting round our old race control and found a box full of old trophies. One really stood out because it was bent and leaning at a stupid angle and we thought, that'll do. We'll call it the Hangover Trophy. It did get a bit hectic with grands prix as well, like!"

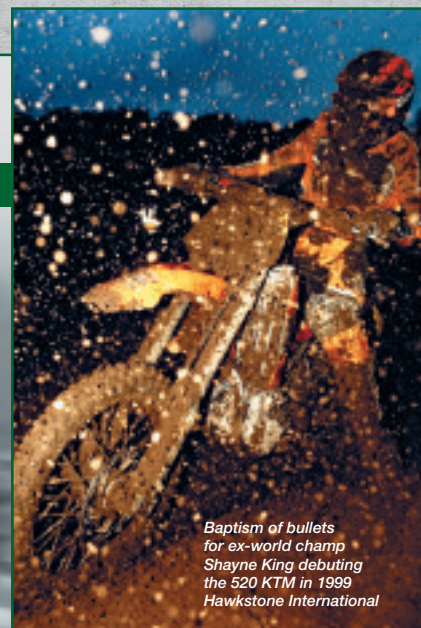
The inaugural event ran with a blanket of snow covering the famous Shropshire valley. "A few years did get a bit dodgy," admits



## HAWKSTONE PARK INTERNATIONAL MOTOCROSS



1986 winner man in black Rob Meek storms the hill on his 250 Yamaha



Baptism of bullets for ex-world champ Shayne King debuting the 520 KTM in 1999 Hawkstone International

Williams, who became clerk of the course. "But it wasn't meant to be taken too seriously and a lot of sportsmen don't drink. Mind you men like Arthur Browning and Terry Challinor would have a few! I remember running through reams of paper on an old hand-operated roller drum printer preparing the programme. It was intended as a fun thing that eventually got too serious really!"

There was certainly a serious look to the first entry. Headed by British champion Graham Noyce and his predecessor Vic Allan it featured most of the UK's big names. And while Noyce

picked up the minor earnings wily Scot Allan waited until the main event to lift a hundred quid first prize.

"Kawasaki and Alec Wright were loyal sponsors," says Williams. "And Tony Darby at Cradley has always helped us out." Neil Hudson (Maico) landed £60 for second place in a 25 minute plus one lap race run in testing conditions with Bill Aldridge (Suzuki) netting £40 for third, Andy Robertson (Sandiford Montesa) 25 for fourth and KTM debutante Dave Tomasik a tenner for sixth.

The schoolboys were equally impressive, 15

year-old Dave Watson (Yamaha) going 1-1-2 in the three ten minute plus one lap legs to pip 14 year-old third race winner Dave Thorpe (Suzuki).

Subsequent years saw outings for road racing stars. "We used to invite them for a demonstration race," laughs Williams. "It became quite a thing with guys like Mick Grant, Barry Ditchburn and Steve Parrish showing up. Once there was so much snow the public were pelting them with snowballs. A couple of years later it froze so hard we couldn't race. Another time we'd retired to a hostelry in Hodnet after racing and it started snowing heavily. >>



1987 winner Dave Thorpe enjoys the aftermath with runners-up Andy Nicholls (left) and Merv Anstie (right)



American Mike Brown (CAT Honda) wins inaugural 125 international in 1999



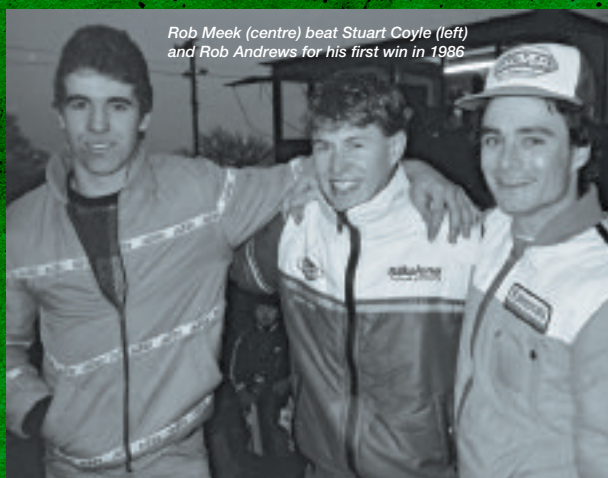
# HAWKSTONE HAT-TRICK HERO!

## SNEAKY MEEKY'S SALOP CELEBRATIONS...

Nathan and Ben Watson's dad Rob Meek won the Hangover Trophy three times, starting out with the 10th anniversary race in 1986, when he rode a 250 Yamaha. "It was frozen solid but I'd been practising for six weeks at The Desert in snow and ice so I was like a duck on water!" explains Meeky. "Some big shots refused to race. Jared Smith and Kurt Nicoll – who did a bit of commentating instead – both declined. There was no stopping in to prepare for the race but I was out practising the day before."

Rob won again on a Terry Rudd Honda in 1991. "And in '92 Thorpey came to play but I was too sharp for him," he says proudly. "Squeezed him out by a few points. I was more of a winter man (he won Weston beach race five times). I wasn't a hardened pro during the summer months. Used to get the jet-ski out and party. That was just my outlook. Business was good and I could make more money running the family scrapyard. But when I knew I could sneak it in I'd knuckle down and get the job done."

"Everyone in the East Midlands knew the Warsop Sand Bowl. It was an old AMCA track. Me and Jamie Dobb would be down there all the time. I was brought up in sand and always struggled with hard pack. And I never needed a winter break. I'd ride all over and get stuck in. I was probably burned out by the summer!"



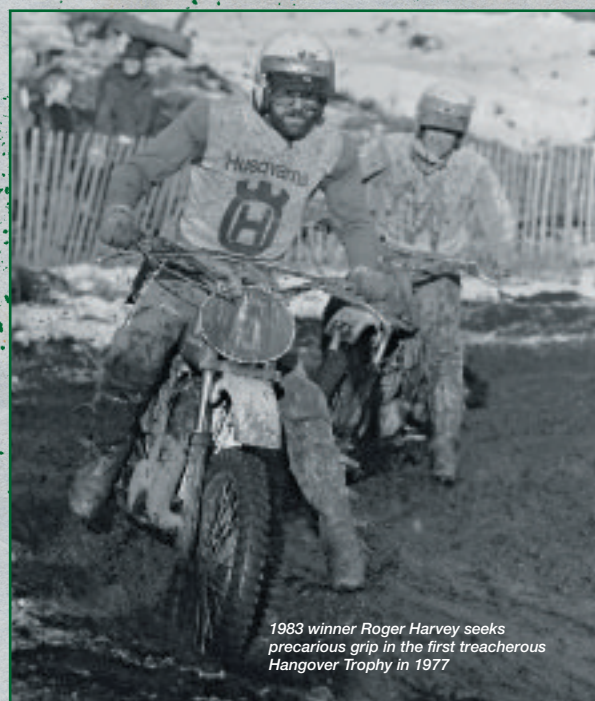
Rob Meek (centre) beat Stuart Coyle (left) and Rob Andrews for his first win in 1986



British Open Champ Jocke Karlsson (RWJ Honda) wins 1999 500 international



Rob Hooper won in 1981



1983 winner Roger Harvey seeks precarious grip in the first treacherous Hangover Trophy in 1977

We realised we'd left poor old Gerald (their elderly sound system engineer!) at the track and Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham loaned me his Range Rover to go and fetch him. It was snowing so hard that I broke the rear screen wiper trying to clear it! Other times we'd rig up lights in the medical room and have loads of drink in. It was great!"

Local ace Rob Hooper won on a Maico in 1981. "The year I was least prepared for it after a jolly good New Year's Eve," he smiles. "It must have been mild because when it was frozen I was useless, giving it a handful of throttle and sliding off. The plastic trophy broke before we got it home!" Wonder what happened to that majestic original then?

Rob's near neighbour Roger Harvey (Yamaha) was another apt winner in 1983. Track conditions could vary enormously. "Sometimes it was muddy, slushy and sludgy," recalls Roger. "Other times you'd find big blocks of sand-filled ice! Over the years I thought right, I'm gonna stay in, not drink and make sure I'm in good shape. Be very professional. That didn't work! So in '83 we had a big night out at Squires Wine Bar in downtown Rugeley. I was only going for a bit of fun and to enjoy the social occasion, but won the first race!" Jem Whatley took the second but crashed out of race three. "The pressure was off then!" Harvey claimed a classic Hangover victory. "And next day I rode the Clifton trial. Nothing like a bit of training Jack!"

Three years later several leading riders pulled out because of snow. Winner Rob Meek, then an AMCA star, still had to beat grand prix racers Stuart Coyle and Rob Andrews in front of a mega crowd. "It was absolutely treacherous," remembers Andrews. "I only raced because Alec Wright was there. So scary when it was frozen. We rode slippery surfaces all the time but in mud you can feel the traction. On ice you can feel nothing and just fly off at speed!"

I first saw the race in 1978 as a schoolboy and thought 'how cool is that'. I rode in 1979 on a 125 Maico and won the first schoolboy race, never realising I was in the lead until my pal Jeff waved the chequered flag he'd 'borrowed' from Pete Francis!"

10 years later in 1989 Andrews debuted his Bikesport Honda at the Hangover. "I'd love to have won the thing so in December I went practising in Belgium and Holland for a week with Dai Smith. Then I won the first two legs and fell off in the third!"

1987 actually attracted live BBC television coverage and sponsorship from Sealink Ferries. On a fine sunny day reigning world champion Dave Thorpe rode his full factory Honda for the last time ever and won convincingly from Andy Nicholls and Merv Anstie.

Rob Meek completed his hat-trick in the early nineties but the Hangover Trophy was ultimately defeated by Arctic conditions. "A local farmer loaned us a power hammer to tow behind our tractor and break up the ice on the

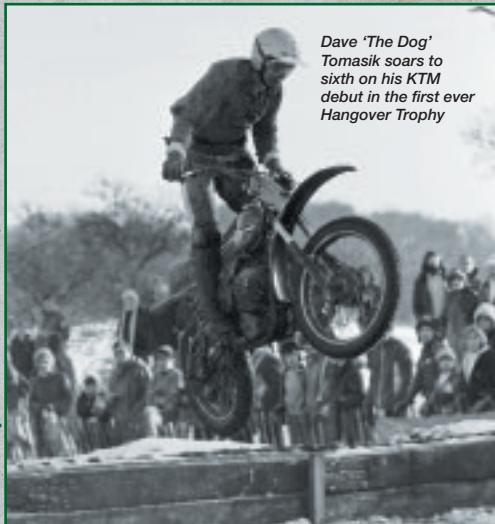
hill," remembers Williams. "But I found bits of metal up the hill because ice was snapping the blades! We decided on a move to March and obtained an international permit because we were determined to attract foreign riders."

So the first Hawkstone International materialised in 1999, the year the Salop club ran its last grand prix.

A stellar cast competed in filthy weather for what turned out to be a Honda benefit. RWJ's British Open champion, Swede Jocke Karlsson, won the 500 class with Scotsman David Campbell (Bikesport Honda) a sensational second. World champion elect, dapper little Frenchman Frederic Bolley won the 250s from Gordon Crockard and Paul Malin. And American Mike Brown, riding Dave Thorpe's CAT Honda, took 125 honours in front of Stephen Sword, ninth placed teenage Geordie tearaway Brad Anderson (Bikesport Yamaha) surely the only man to have raced every Hawkstone International ever!

Heroes like Joel Smets, Grant Langston, Jamie Dobb, Stefan Everts, Kevin Stribos and Shaun Simpson were victorious over the next decade until the Salop club quit the project. So in 2009 seven members, including chairman Williams and secretary Gary Ford formed HIMX for the sole purpose of promoting the international every year. And today Hawkstone is established as a major venue factory teams attend before striking out on the grand prix trail all thanks to the Hangover Trophy!





Dave 'The Dog' Tomasik soars to sixth on his KTM debut in the first ever Hangover Trophy



Stunning second in 1999 500 International for Scot David Campbell (Bikesport Honda)



World champ Dave Thorpe rides a full factory CR500 for the last time to win all three 1987 televised Sealink Ferries races



17 year-old Geordie Brad Anderson (Bikesport Yamaha) was ninth 125 in 1999 and is still at it in 2017!



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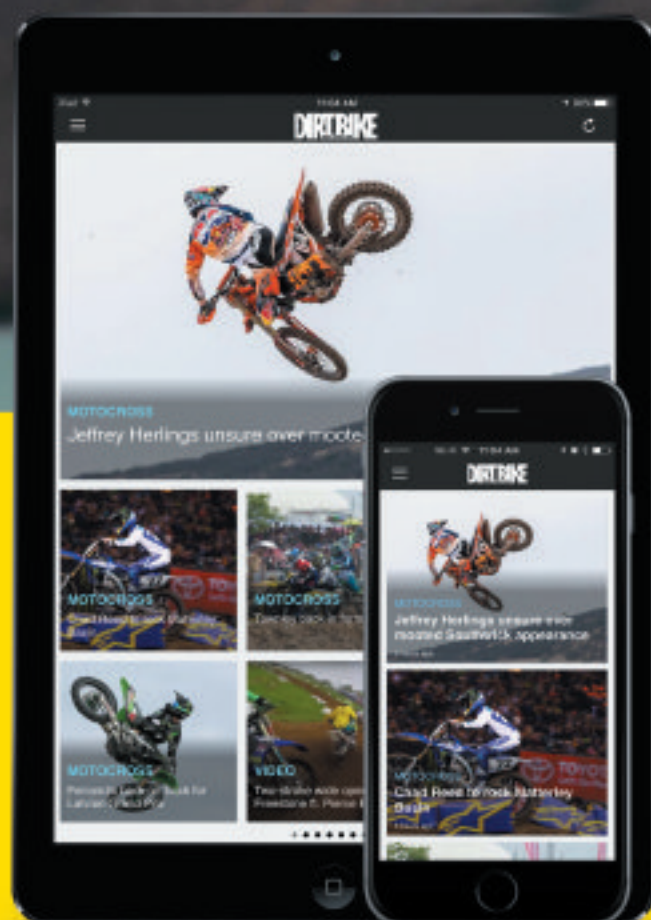


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# SOFTLY, SOFTLY!

**SINCE FORMING THE CAB SCREENS TEAM IN 2013, LEE WEBBER HAS BEEN SLOWLY BUILDING UNTIL NOW - HEADING INTO A SECOND YEAR WITH HUSQVARNA - HE'S GOT FOUR RIDERS RACING BRITAIN'S MAIN CHAMPIONSHIPS...**

Words by **Sean Lawless** Pictures by **Dick Law**

**T**alk to any member of Cab Screens Husqvarna about the team set-up and one word crops up all the time – ‘family’. Motocross is very much an individual sport once the gate’s dropped but the atmosphere under the awning can at times be just as important as getting your suspension dialled. Happy riders, after all, win races.

The Cab Screens team has been around since 2013 and has been slowly building ever since, following a gradual programme of expansion that’s been carefully orchestrated by team owner Lee Webber and his brother Ian.

This year, as an officially-supported Husqvarna UK team, it will field three riders in the Maxxis ACU British Motocross Championship and Michelin MX Nationals with a fourth rider chasing the major domestic youth titles. It’s hardly been a meteoric rise but, then again, it was never intended to be.

“We started small and have worked our way up,” explains 47-year-old Lee. “Last year we expanded and I want to do two years at that level.”











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MX3.1

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We've now added a youth rider so I'd say we've only expanded very, very slightly this year but we've not made that step yet into being a pro team.

"I want to be smart about it – I want the team to be around for a long time and I want that progression to be gradual. I'd rather get there slowly than take two massive steps forward and then go four steps back.

"The next big jump will be becoming a pro team and we're not there yet because the team isn't employing anyone directly. But we want to get there by making sure each year the team goes forward slightly."

The family feel is directly down to Lee and Ian, both former riders and diehard motocross fans who wanted to stay involved in the sport after retiring from racing.

"I stopped racing when I was 37 to set my own business up. That's gone from strength to strength and I now run two businesses but when I couldn't ride I needed something to fill the void so that's why we decided to run a team. I knew my limits as a rider – and reached them – but I'd always dreamed of running a team, I just never had the financial backing to do it.

"We put an advert in Trials and Motocross News because me and my brother wanted to help out a youth rider who perhaps needed a bit of financial backing – someone who had the talent but didn't have the budget – and, believe it or not, we only had three enquiries. >>

Sparky Dan Thornhill is a former youth champion who's making electrifying progress in the professional ranks



Josh Peters is one of the team's two youth contenders



## DAN THORNHILL

### FC 450 – MX1

A former Red Bull Pro Nationals Rookie champ, Gloucester-based Dan is a qualified electrician. A string of injuries has held him back over the past few seasons but the 21-year-old's starting his third season with the team fighting fit.

"Sometimes you see a team and everything seems so serious and focussed on politics but it's not like that with Cab Screens," he says. "It's like a

family environment. They want to help you because of what you can do, not what you can bring to the team. They just want to see you go out there and do your best and then everyone's happy.

"This is the start of my third year in the MX1 class but only my second on the Husqvarna. There are a few little changes between the '16 and the '17 bike but I fell in love with the bike last year and obviously it's good for me to be going into my second year with the same manufacturer.

"In the past I've changed manufacturers and switched from 250 to 450 and when that happens all winter you're on the back foot trying to learn the bike so it's nice to be able to go from one year straight into the next with the same set-up."

With his team-mate James Harrison enjoying the same sense of continuity, Dan knows he'll have one of his fiercest rivals under the same awning.

"You always want to beat your team-mate but me and James have got a good friendship. Last year we seemed to be battling together in pretty much every race. To be fair we had some hard battles but everything was clean and afterwards we'd come in and laugh about it and then move on to the next race."

Dan, who finished 15th in the Maxxis last year, has his 2017 goal clear in his mind.

"I'd love to become a regular top-10 runner in the British championship. I've had two seasons now with a few injuries and I'd just like to get a clean season under my belt when I can stay healthy and ride consistently week-in and week-out."



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James Harrison enters his second season as a Cab Screens team rider



"One that stood out was George Clarke and we went with him for a couple of years. Then we added a young lad called Josh Coleman who we've still got with us now and then we added Dan Thornhill in 2015."

At the end of 2015 the team severed ties with Yamaha and switched to Husqvarna. The move coincided nicely with the resurgence in Husqvarna's fortunes and Cab Screens ticked all the right boxes with its approach to racing.

"We spoke to Dave Edwards at Husqvarna and they have been absolutely fantastic. They love what we do, they love that we're a very socially active team and that we present ourselves well. The relationship has been great and that's why we're with them for the second year – they're just great people to work with. Dave and Thomas Gillingham have been fantastic and also Mike Carter at Husky Sport."

James Harrison came on board when the team switched manufacturers and for 2017 Cab Screens has hooked up with Josh Peters who'll race a 125cc machine in all the major youth championships.

Spearheading the team's Maxxis efforts, former youth champions Dan and James will bang bars in MX1 as they bid to establish themselves as top-10 runners.

"Dan's got a great youth CV – he won a lot of stuff – and he's a great lad to work with, one of the best. He's definitely going forward but it's probably not quite happened for him yet because the last few years he's had injuries."

>>



## JAMES HARRISON

FC 450 – MX1

James recovered from an injury-hit 2015 to end last year 12th in the Maxxis series, just a handful of points away from that all-important top-10 finish.

The 21-year-old from Southampton is a former AX Rookie champion but it's outdoors where his 2017 ambitions lie.

"I'm slowly getting there," he says. "Since I moved into the adults I've had a few steady seasons and hopefully I'll push on a bit more this year. This will be my first full season on a 450 – I started last year on a 350 and swapped halfway through but by then the damage was done."

"The results were so much better once I'd made the move because I could get out of the gate so hopefully I'll carry on getting the good results right from the start."

The Cab Screens Husqvarna environment suits James' easy-going nature and helps to diffuse a lot of the tension that goes hand-in-hand with racing at this level.

"The team is awesome. There are so many good guys around me it makes going to motocross fun. There's a real good team spirit. Everyone is up for a laugh but at the same time they all know the jobs they have to do – the team's all about doing well."

"We've definitely got the tools we need and looking ahead to this year is exciting for me because I'm back working with Nev Bradshaw and his 272 Training School so I've been staying at his house and training on and off the bike with him."

"It's helped me out loads and I already feel even better with the bike than I did at the end of last year."

So how does James feel about the battle with Dan to be the team's top MX1 rider?

"We're good mates off the track but obviously it spurs you on because everybody wants to be the best rider in the team every moto."

"Dan's a really good rider and we've had some great battles but we still help each other out with lines and stuff like that. It's good to have someone close to my own speed so we can work things out together."



The Canada Heights crowd looks on as Dan ploughs through a deep rut at last year's Maxxis round



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"He likes to do his winter beach training – races like Le Touquet and Skegness – and he's very good at it but he hasn't been able to do that this time because of an injury. I do believe that might be the best thing that could have happened to him, strange as that sounds, because it's given his body a much-needed rest.

"It's also allowed him to focus on the coming season. He's got something to offer to the Maxxis and the MX Nationals and he's got to be looking at this year to establish himself as a top-10 rider.

"James is another really nice lad and

we get on very well with him and his family. He's got a lot to offer. This year I think he'll become a top-10 regular in MX1. He's another guy who works hard and trains hard and is progressively going forward as well.

"You'll get guys who once in a blue moon step out of the schoolboy ranks – like the Watson brothers or Adam Sterry – and they go straight into being a podium rider. Other guys take a few years to get there and I believe James will be that rider. It's good to have him on the team for a second year.

"Dan and James are both only 21 >>



## JOSH COLEMAN

FC 250 – MX2

The team's longest-serving rider, after scoring points at the last round

of the 2016 British championship 19-year-old Josh will compete in his first full year of Maxxis competition.

The former GT Cup and BYN champion, a marine engineer for BAE Systems, is keeping his goals realistic for 2017.

"My main aim this year is to win the MX2 Experts class at the MX Nationals and be a regular in the top 20 in the Maxxis. I don't think these are unrealistic – I've been working hard and had a really good off-season. I've put in a lot of effort and bike time and feel very motivated.

"Scoring points last year has definitely been an advantage along with just the whole experience of being in that environment, racing such talented riders. It's not only the top 10, everyone is fighting just to be able to score points. Make one mistake and you'll have three riders going past you."

Starting his fourth season with the team, it's obviously an environment that he feels right at home in.

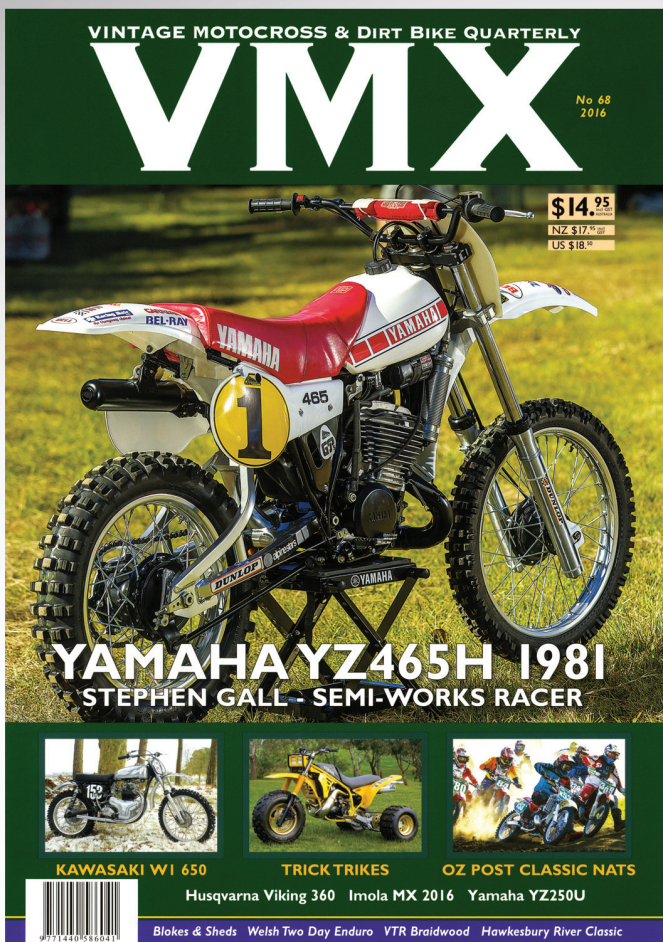
"The team's like a family. I couldn't really ask for anything better. It's a nice community and everyone gets on well with each other. When it comes to the racing it's very serious but there's always plenty of banter under our awning which makes weekends fun.

"I'd like to make it professionally in motocross and make a living out of it – that would be a dream come true – but I know how tough that is which is why I've dug deep with my career as a marine engineer, so I've always got a back-up plan."



*Fairly evenly matched for speed it's not uncommon to see James just leading Dan and vice versa*





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*A wildcard appearance at the British GP was hard work but fun for both Dan and James*



## JOSH PETERS

### TC 125 — youth

The newest member of the team, 15-year-old Josh Peters has racing in his blood. His dad, Jason, is a former GP race-winning sidecarcross passenger and Josh is an ex-British BMX champion who's also won European rounds and competed in the world championships.

Although he's only been riding for four years he's already picked up international honours after helping the British team to second overall at last year's Coupe de l'Avenir and he was second in the 2016 BW85cc class of the British Youth Nationals.

This year he's moved up to the 125cc class and he'll be contesting the big three domestic championships.

"I've been out on a 125cc Yamaha quite a lot of times before Christmas and since I've got the Husky I've ridden it three or four times," he says. "I'm getting on really well with it. The 85 was too small for me – it was hard to ride."

"In the Maxxis and MX Nationals where I'll be racing against 250Fs I'd like to get in the top 10 and in the BYNs I'm aiming to finish top three and hopefully win some races."

"I think some tracks will favour the 250s but on hardpack ones I reckon it should be all right. I think racing a 250 can make some people quite lazy so it will be good for me to race a 125 for a year."

"It's my first time on a proper team and I'm finding it great – all the boys are nice and helpful. Lee and Ian are easy to talk to and give good advice and the people who are doing the suspension are a great help."



*Dan powers through a berm during pre-season testing at FatCat*

but it feels like they've been around for ever. You look at other riders when they've been that age, someone like Brad Anderson or Kristian Whatley – they were knocking around those 10th, 11th, 12th positions.

"Sometimes James and Dan are hard on themselves because they haven't got that top 10 so I keep telling them that they're going forward and they've got it in their locker to do that. They have to keep persevering and putting the effort in and it will happen."

Representing the team in MX2, 19-year-old Josh Coleman is Cab Screens' longest-serving rider and Lee is confident that there are big things to come from the former BYN 85cc champ as he moves into his first full season in top-flight adult racing.

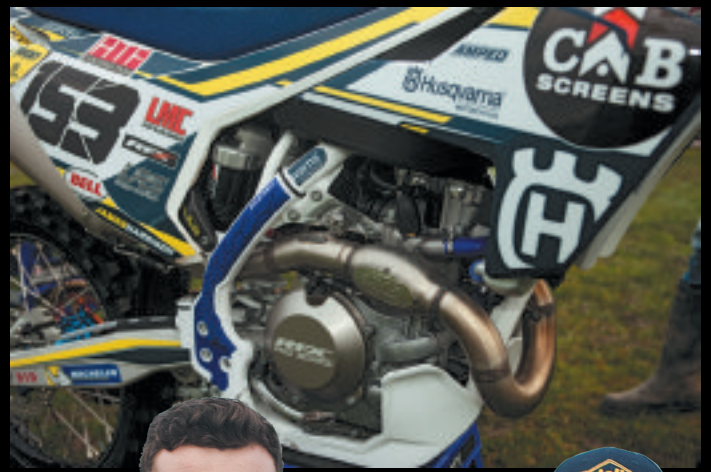
"Josh came on the team the second year and he's progressively getting better. It's not quite happened yet for Josh but I believe it will – it's not for the want of trying because his dedication is 100 per cent and he's got a great natural ability to ride a bike. He's a really nice lad, he puts everything he's got into the sport and his training is fantastic."

"He's got into the Maxxis this year so we're looking for him to consistently score points and he'll also be doing the MX2 Expert Cup at the MX Nationals – as a minimum I'd like him to finish top three in that. So we've given him some goals and I'm sure it will come good for him. I do believe in him."

The newest member of the team, 15-year-old Josh Peters will represent Cab Screens in 125cc youth competition.









## IAN WEBBER

### King Coms!

Lee's younger brother, Ian's the team's one-man Communications Department and is responsible for Cab Screen's flourishing social media profile.

The 46-year-old, who raced a handful of British 250cc championship rounds back in the day, helps pull together the package that allows the team to go racing.

"I've got three difference roles I suppose," he says. "I go out and find sponsorship – I'm a sales director at Microsoft Advertising so I've got a fair bit of experience of dealing with brands. I also do the press for the team and

then there's the social media side of things which I take care of.

"We place massive importance on saying thanks to our sponsors through shouting about their products to our followers. We've got just over 2000 followers now on Facebook and it's growing really quickly.

"It may sound pretty corny but we try to give something back to our sponsors and fans. We try and do stuff that's different and engage with race fans in new ways. We had some replica Cab Screens model bikes made and ran a competition to win one and got something like 520 shares which is a number some big brands would be happy with."

Fan interaction is a big part of Ian's strategy

and the team's accessibility proves very popular on race day.

"We do a lot of goody bag giveaways at the British championship rounds and for the autograph sessions we make sure the riders sit out in pitlane where the kids are. We don't hide behind the awning.

"No matter what Dan or James think, they are heroes to lots of kids so we make sure they're accessible. We also hand out goody bags to the first 50 people who turn up and at Foxhill and Lyng we had 30 or 40 people waiting before we'd even started the autograph session."

**To follow the team on Facebook and Twitter search for @cabscreensmx**



Winter means lots of motos for Josh Coleman and the team



"Because of the Michelin MX Nationals format we've been able to see the youth class riders. We thought about adding a BW85cc rider for 2017 so I watched those races quite a bit and there are some really good lads in there.

"I think all the top riders have stepped up to 125 this year so I didn't really know enough about the lesser riders. We spoke to his dad Jason who was really keen for Josh to be on the team and learn from the lads we've got."

Lee was an Expert-grade rider in the Southern Centre before he quit to set up Cab Screens, an on-site plant machinery glazing specialist. A second company – Leydene Glass and Glazing – followed and his astute business sense, along with his brother's experience in high-level sales, has proved vital in attracting financial backing.

Despite his commercial savvy, Lee's business acumen was put to the test in December when 2016 title sponsor LiuGong – despite a verbal agreement – pulled its support.

"It was a bombshell at the wrong time of year so we've had to work hard to try and fill that financial void. We're good to go now for the season but it hasn't been easy."

It was a body blow that could have caused many other teams to fold but with a long list of sponsors – including many big-hitters from the off-road industry – it's clear that Cab Screens Husqvarna has the back-up to go the distance.





# PROPREP!



## GET YOUR GOGGLES READY TO RACE WITH DAN GROVE'S GUIDE TO PREPPING ROLL-OFFS...

Words and photos by **Dan Grove**

**B**eing able to see is quite an important thing to most of us and when it comes to racing motocross or enduro I'd say it's pretty much essential. With all that flying roost and stuff, racing off-road already offers up some difficulties when it comes to keeping your vision clear but add rain before a race – or even worse during it – and the problem is even worse.

To help keep your view of the racetrack clear I'm going to go share some of my top tips with you and go through my signature roll-off goggle build. It's a process I've been doing for the past 10 years and not once have I had a goggle failure or needed to remove my goggles during a race or practice session (and Dan gets roosted a lot, just saying – Sutty). So if that's something that appeals to you as much as you value your eyesight then read on...



### STEP 1

The first step to preparing for a mud race is duct taping an old goggle lens onto your helmet peak to extend it so that your goggles are much less exposed to flying roost and falling rain. Foam on top of your helmet and on the chin bar is commonly used to stop mud from sticking and when I need to do this I use foam sourced from the packaging that printer toners come wrapped in at work as it's thin and works a treat. Tape a rectangle shape onto the top of your helmet and over your extended peak and your helmet's ready for a mud race.







## STEP 2

If you've just rode a mudder in roll-offs I'll just chip in that you want to remove the lens from the frame and then hand wash the goggle. You can bung them in the washing machine but as goggles are pretty delicate they won't stand up to repeated washes. I rinse them with a hose pipe and then have a bowl filled with warm water and some laundry detergent where I'll dunk the goggle and massage the dirt out (it may take a few dunks and massages to get them clean) and then I rinse them out and hang dry. Wear marigolds cause laundry detergent will clean all the moisture out of your hands.

For the lens, film (if you still have a decent amount of film left), and canisters, I carefully remove as much mud by hand then clean them up with wet wipes and use kitchen roll to dry them off. If you use water it'll get into the cord and rot it over time or if you really have to use water, pull the cord out as far as it'll go and stick a clothes peg on it next to the canister for it to dry out.



## STEP 3

At this stage your clean goggles are ready for reassembly or if you've bought a new set the same procedure applies. If you're starting with a brand-new set of roll-offs then you might think that you don't need to do anything else to get them set up besides adding the film and mud strip. Unfortunately, you're wrong. Depending on what you have in front of you, (like if you have  $\frac{3}{4}$  of film left and there was no need to disassemble more than the removal of the lens to wash them) you may be a few steps ahead but I'll start as if you've got a cleaned set of roll-offs and how to go about building them.



## STEP 4

Carefully reinstall the lens back into the frame and ensure that it's correctly located by the slots in the lens and in the groove in the frame. I find that sitting down with the goggle on your thigh is the easiest way to do this as the goggle can't move around as easily as it would on a table.





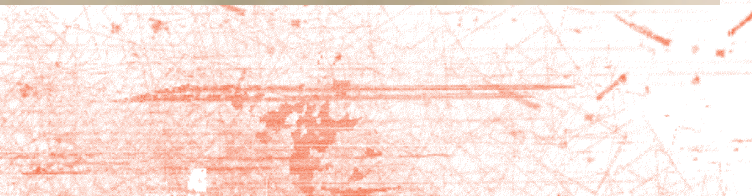
### STEP 5

With the canister doors removed, unstick the end of the roll-off film and place the film in the 'supply' side which is the right side as worn and carefully install the canister door.



### STEP 6

Insert one of the old pins from a used film in the 'pull' side that the film goes into when the toggle is pulled and carefully feed the film across the lens in a straight line as possible and stick the end of the film onto the pin. If you have new goggles then a spare pin should be included in the box. Carefully install the door on the 'pull' side and give it a few little pulls to ensure that it can't come unstuck.



### STEP 7

Make sure that the film is sat tight against the lens on the inside of the nose section part of the frame as this helps to prevent the film dropping down when it has heavy mud on it. It's doubly important to do this as your vision will be distorted as well if the strip is running on the frame.



### STEP 8

No matter how well your mud strip fits between the two canisters, there's going to be a gap of some sort where if you take a face full of roost the smaller particles of dirt or water will find their way behind the film. To combat this I use Sellotape so that the goggles look unmodified however for the purpose of showing what I mean I have used electrical tape. If you use Sellotape then your rivals won't see your preparation and in racing you need any advantage that you can get.

Carefully bridge the gap between the mud strip and the canister and then follow this up with another strip of tape above it and sometimes use more smaller pieces to ensure that nothing can run down between the gap and behind the film. I do this both sides because if you get roosted and the mud is on the 'pull' side and in the gap between the strip and the canister you run the risk of the film getting pinched as the mud will work its way in and jam the system up.







## STEP 9

The next step is to tape up the canisters so that no dirt or water gets in anywhere. It would be a bit daft pulling a dusty or wet film across your lens so it's worth doing this and it also helps to prevent a stone from hitting the canister and breaking it open mid moto. If there's standing water then you definitely need to do this on both sides to keep everything sealed and watertight.



## STEP 10

If you're riding somewhere that's got a lot of moisture in the ground – and let's be fair this is the only time to use roll-offs – then it's worth stacking up some tear-offs over the top for the first few turns or laps depending on conditions. Rip N Roll have such a good system with their Colossus goggle where the same tear-offs can be used on their tear-off lens as well as fitted onto their roll off system.

I've put seven tear-offs on top of roll-offs before for a proper mud race and as you can see from the photo I also make a tear off mud strip as well out of duct tape. You'll want 2/3 of the width of the roll torn off to make this and then fold it over on itself halfway before applying this to the frame across the top of the tear-offs but just be careful about not sticking it onto any of the foam on the goggle. Doing this will stop mud and water getting in between them and works in the same way as the mud strip on the roll-offs.





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# RAGE

**RIDER:** GEORGE SIM-MUTCH

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# AX ATTACK!

THE MINI WARRIORS BATTLE IT OUT IN THE UK'S ONLY INDOOR RACE SERIES...

**W**ith the Belfast SSE Arena double header in the can, five rounds are down with just two to go in the 2017 AX series. Following the penultimate round at Sheffield Arena February 11 champions get crowned at the Wembley SSE Arena on February 18. The headlines so far read – Boughen magnificent in the 65s, Ben Clayton rules in the Superminis as Kacey Hird's challenge hits the buffers and Dylan Woodcock rocks in the Pro Lites.

In the 65s after scooping nine out of 10 possible race wins it's hats off to RFX KTM's Ashton Boughen. Following up on big brother Kiean's superb victory last year Ashton is now odds on to keep the title in the family. Team Green's new rising talent Ben Mustoe sits in championship second and he's the only one taking a win away from Boughen. That was at the series opener in Manchester and it's fair to say with three overall runner-up plates he's

been the strongest most consistent challenge.

Shaun Mahoney occupies championship third. He stepped up to the plate brilliantly finishing as runner up at the Birmingham round going 2-2. Other notable shows have come from nine-year-old Charley Irwin – he grabbed podium second hitting a 3-2 result in front of his home Belfast crowd at round four then made podium third the following night. Also in Belfast it was a glorious round four for Shropshire lad Jake Davies, 5-2 rewarded him with third overall.

Up at the sharp end in the Superminis, Ben Clayton, together with Team Green duo Kacey Hird and Bobby Bruce set off at an amazing trot. Clayton and Hird appeared evenly matched and nothing was better than the round two evening show in Glasgow – surely one of the best youth races in AX history.

After winning the afternoon gambit Kawasaki

kingpin Hird jumped into the lead again but stalled it in the early stages – next thing Clayton had tangled with him and Booby Bruce seized his chance to lead. Remounting first Clayton then set about a quite amazing chase down of the leader. Hanging off the bike at times he ultimately nicked a classic last gasp win cresting the finish line jump inches in front of Bruce.

At round three Hird's challenge would end with unfortunate injury as 14-year-old Clayton consolidated his series lead with a second double win after going 1-1 in Manchester. Nailing a third maximum score at round four and then going 1-2 at round five, Clayton has won every round with just two races lost.

Making the podium at every round and with a single race win to his name Bruce is ultra strong in series second as Louie Kessell is likewise

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consistent and solid holding series third. Elsewhere in the section nailing down podium third at both Manchester and Birmingham rounds 12-year-old German star Carl Osterman has to be one to watch for the future.

With JK Yamaha French ace Yannix Irsuti in the mix along with seasoned elders Chris Bayliss, Joe Clayton and Jason Meara 17-year-old Dylan Woodcock is rising to the Pro Lites challenge magnificently. Running 3-5 at the Manchester opener Woody suggested he had the necessary tools for a podium hit and after a few tweaks made to the Team Green machine between rounds Dylan then went 2-2 in Glasgow with his name was up in lights as the overall winner.

A 3-2 scorecard at the technical Birmingham round secured a runner-up position then a pair of 5-1s in Belfast meant a second runner up plate and a second overall win. Proving a point at every round

DW is now in with a real shout just nine points off top spot – looking further down the standings good efforts from Josh Greedy and Ben Burridge mean they hold series ninth and 10th.

### Series standings

#### 65cc

1 Ashton Boughen 198 points, 2 Ben Mustoe 167, 3 Shaun Mahoney 147, 4 Charley Irwin 138, 5 Jake Davies 136

#### Supermini

1 Ben Clayton 196 points, 2 Bobby Bruce 174, 3 Louie Kessell 154, 4 Callum Beeken 135, 5 Ben White 129

#### Pro Lites

1 Yannix Irsuti 176 points, 2 Chris Bayliss 171, 3 Dylan Woodcock 167, 4 Joe Clayton 158, 5 Jason Meara 140



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SPOTLIGHT ON...

# GEORGE SIM-MUTCH #491

HOMETOWN: STOCKPORT, CHESHIRE | DOB: 04/09/01 | SPONSORS: DERBYSHIRE OFF ROAD CENTRE

Experiencing a roller coaster ride he's been on and off the National circuit since 2011 – more off than on it has to be said – but following focused efforts in 2016 George Sim-Mutch now has his career back on track.

As the top school year nine performer in the Open Class of last season's British Youth Nationals he finished in championship 10th and that was after racing the final two rounds with a cracked wrist.

Now 15, George began his career with limited outings at Auto and 65cc level, jumping onto an 85cc machine earlier than most. He first popped up on the Rage radar as one to watch in the 2013 season as an 11 year old.

The meeting in question was a GT Cup affair at Sherwood with GSM up against older SW85cc hot shots – Callum Green, Chris Mills and Tom Grimshaw. Carding a 1-2 in day one action Mutchy was sensational matching the lap times of the best on both days and despite finishing in fourth overall he definitely rocked the boat that weekend. Even now, mention the meeting to George, he'll smile and say "Yeah, I won day one up against some smart older lads didn't I?"

Catching the attention of Chad Yarranton, George signed for the Passion Racing Kawasaki squad in 2014 and he ended that year as he did the previous one shaking a stick at some of the best in class – this time though in the BW85s. Injury coupled with stolen machinery problems saw 13-year-old George next emerge in 2015 chucking it around on a 125cc

Yamaha in some AMCA events.

That was a wasted season in many ways but 2016 opened up with a new determination, a place in the British Youth Nationals and a brace of KTMs to play with. Racking up top-15 finishes results the year began promisingly enough but on the longest trip of the year up to Leuchars both KTMs decided they'd had enough. Three races were missed and things looked a little bleak but then along came Tim Hales at Derbyshire Off Road Centre with an offer to ride Honda.

Instantly George loved the new red hot iron and results got knocked up a gear with top-10 returns now more the norm. A single outing in Maxxis MXY2 at the Foxhill finale last September saw George mixing it inside the top-10 in moto one – he eventually finished 11th dodgy wrist and all.

Following an October practice day accident – which left him badly injured – there's been a 14 week lay off. Rage caught up with Mutchy on the haul back to full fitness...

**Rage:** Hi George, tell me about happenings since last season ended and your plans for 2017...

**GSM:** "The knee and leg break last October was really painful. It's the worst accident I've had and it wasn't any way my fault either which made it really annoying. Having my knee screwed and pinned back together, a broken tibia and ACL problems to sort has set me back three months. I'm now in the

gym three or four times a week, working hard to be at 100 per cent for the British Youth Nationals and Maxxis MXY2 championships. I'll be looking for solid top 10 results when it all kicks off."

**Rage:** You've got help from Tim Hales at the Derbyshire Off Road Centre and trainer Patrick Major on board and you're building on the form from last season – when will we see you at your best again?

**GSM:** "Coming back from this injury it might be mid-season before I hit top form. Derbyshire Off Road Centre are supporting me again in 2017, supplying the bikes and everything else I need. Had it not been for Tim at DORC I wouldn't have finished last season at all and Patrick Major is another guy I can't thank enough. He has taught me so much in the past year and I'm sure I wouldn't be where I am now without Tim and Pat.

"I'm lucky to have a few good people around me, that includes my dad of course and there's big Paul Searles too. He owns a private track not far from me that he lets me use for free. He even puts up with my dad's moaning – he's some guy for that alone..."

**Rage:** Finally George, tell me something that not a lot of people know about you?

**GSM:** "My racing number 491 is my birthday – fourth of September 2001. No excuses for anyone not remembering now..."

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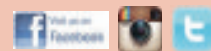
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Jeremy Martin's not short on style – just speed and luck if the start of the 2017 SX season is anything to go by

# STADIUM TRICKERY

The American stadium season is underway again. There's a new format and a load of new machinery. ANDREW GEE was there for the opening rounds and managed to take a look at this year's bikes.

AFTER a year of arguments and splits the AMA, the governing body, and Stadium Motorsports, the promoters, have patched up their differences for 1985, introduced a new 250cc series and given the new 250s a new format. Now, the first three riders from each quarter-final transfer directly into the main event. Fourth to 13th places go to a semi final. The first three from each semi and two from a recharge complete the field. Also, for the first time there are

now 10 laps finals instead of one 20 lap race to determine the overall winner. This has proved unpopular with the riders but with a huge crowd at the San Diego opening round, and a sell out 70,000 at Anaheim, the following weekend, it's obvious the changes are as hot as ever with spectators welcome to the changes.

The racing is as hot as ever with Miller Master Broc Glover, 250 National champion Johnny Johnson, defending stadium champion Johnny O'Mara and 125 champion Jeff Ward dominating the opening rounds.

**Honda:** David Bailey, Johnny O'Mara, Ron Lechien and Bob "Hurricane" Hannah make up Honda's hit squad for 1985. Their bikes are all new and super trick. They sound more like 500s than 250s!

A new seat goes right up to the head stock with a hole for the fuel cap. The fuel tank is hand-made, very low and compact. Triple clamps are machined from solid billet and Answer handlebars are used by all riders.

The swinging arm is hand-built as is the exhaust pipe. The rear sub-frame is the box section and removable. On the right-hand side a very long radiator comes down almost to the water pump.

On the left the radiator is half-size to clear the exhaust pipe. Factory Showa forks and shocks handle the suspension chores. Disc brakes are used exclusively up front, but only the Lechien uses a disc in the rear. Hannah, Bailey and O'Mara use drum set ups with adjustable hand-made torque arms.

The Honda mechanics are reluctant to say anything about the motors. An aluminum box fixed next to the carb on the right is connected to a huge ATAC system. No more details are available, but the word is that it's an electronic slide Keihin. The wheels now have conventional spokes – last year they used "Z"-type spokes – with Bridgestone tyres front and rear.

Honda's 1985 supersports offering features low tank, super-long tank and electronic ATAC.



Kawasaki: It is fielding a four-man team this year headed by the 1984 series runner up Jeff Ward, "Wild" Billy Liles, runner Drinker and Mark Barnett complete



Spot the differences. You're right, there are none. Yamaha is once again using production bikes.

**Yamaha:** Following its very successful use of production bikes in 1984 which netted the 250 National Championship and runner up in the 200s, Yamaha is again using production models for 1985. Broc Glover, Ricky Johnson, Keith Bowen and Mark Murphy make up the team.

An Ohlins shock replaces the standard unit with the BASS system removed. A Simons anti-cavitation fork kits are used. A conventionally spoked rear wheel with a large diameter hub – similar to a 1983 490 rear wheel – replaces the stock "Z" spoke item. Tagasago Excel rims and Bridgestone tyres are used front and back. The front wheel is "Z" spoke with Yamaha's new disc brake. A stylish Plastwerks cover protects the disc.

The stock pipe has the welds removed. A 50 tooth rear sprocket is used rather than the 48 tooth stocker and the air box is drilled. A 38mm Mikuni carb is stock.

The Yanks now have the same white plastic and red frame as the Europeans. Much to everyone's delight. Tasteful white Answer handlebars finish the package.



He might have the A Team gloves, but this dude won't about to do anyone a good turn. "The security man."



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# 3X MANIAC!

**THE 2017 AMA SUPERCROSS SERIES KICKED OFF IN CALIFORNIA 32 YEARS AGO AND JUST LIKE HE WAS 32 YEARS AGO ANDY GEE WAS THERE TO CATCH ALL OF THE ACTION...**

Words by Andy Gee Photos by Frank Hoppen

**T**here's a saying that 'a day is a long time in politics' but how about 32 years in AMA supercross? In January 1985 I was in California for the opening round of the supercross championship which was held at San Diego's Jack Murphy stadium and now 32 years later I'm back to see what's changed.

In '85 supercross was still finding its feet. The idea to hold a motocross race inside a stadium is credited to Mike Goodwin with the first AMA sanctioned series being just three races long and held in 1974. 11 years on and the big news in 1985 was the introduction of the 125 East and West regional 125cc

championships to run as support races to the main 250cc class. This would provide experience for younger riders although there was no age limit. The '85 series was run over 11 rounds from January to August – overlapping with the Motocross Nationals, starting.

Back then teams raced works bikes with Team Honda being the powerhouse with the most exotic bikes ridden by reigning champ Johnny O'Mara, David Bailey, Bob Hannah and Ron Lechien. Ricky Johnson and Broc Glover were on the new white, production-based Yamahas (American Yamahas had >>



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The 450 Main Event leaves the line at Petco Park



Just like they were 32 years ago privateers are the lifeblood of the AMA Supercross series

been yellow up until '84) with Jeff Ward and Mark Barnett on factory Kawasakis and Scott Burnworth on a Suzuki. A lone Husqvarna was raced by the first American world champion Danny LaPorte. There were plenty of privateers and a few smaller outfits such as Team Tamm but not a KTM in sight. Incredibly there were no foreign riders either, the original batch of pioneering Europeans replaced by young American racers who had adapted better to the new techniques for supercross.

Everyone worked out of box vans with the mechanic driving the van and preparing the one bike inside. Honda had suspension technicians on hand but usually the mechanic did everything – even changing tyres. All the bikes were 250cc two-strokes with disc brakes on the front wheel but still drum brakes on the rear 18 inch wheel.

Fast forward to 2017 and the Supercross series is now 17 rounds run from January to April and although there have been a few tweaks over the years the rule change to run races over 20 minutes plus a lap rather than 20 laps incredibly marks the first change to the format since 1985.

The bikes are now 450cc four-strokes in the AMA-sanctioned FIM World Championship and 250cc four-strokes in the East/West regional championships. And while the fundamental layout of the bikes is still the same the 1985 bikes look simple and plain by comparison. Steel frames have been replaced by twin spar aluminium frames (although KTM and Husky still use steel albeit more beefy than those seen

in '85), forks are now upside-down and swinging-arms beefed up.

Oversized titanium foot pegs, titanium axles and bolts, carbon-fibre guards and anodised engine plugs and triple clamps add extra bling. With fewer sponsors in '85 – and far less idea about marketing – bikes generally had a few stickers for sponsors products on the back mudguard and the manufacturer on the tank. Team bikes today look like works of art with printed graphics covering every available surface.

San Diego is now host to the second round at Petco Park baseball stadium. This race has been designated 'Military Appreciation Day' and is dedicated to the American military personnel. As I drive into the downtown area the first thing that strikes me is that the stadium has no parking which is very unusual for America and two nearby parking lots have been taken over for the pit areas with competitors riding down closed roads to the stadium. Trams run to the stadium from park-and-ride areas but I manage to park a few blocks away and walk.

Access to the pits costs \$10 and inside the team trucks with huge awnings covered in sponsors' livery are lined up with pristine bikes displayed underneath the awnings. Riders appear for autograph sessions at specified times and keep out of sight at other times. It's a far cry from '85 when riders and mechanics were happy to chat at the back of the van and the fans just mingled around. There are plenty of privateers too – their pickup trucks and >>



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small van tucked at the back of the pits – hoping to qualify for the evening show.

Miller High Life beer has been replaced by Monster Energy as the series sponsor as federal laws now prevent alcohol and tobacco firms sponsoring sporting events. In fact, energy drinks now sponsor just about every top team and rider, providing not only cash but plenty of glamorous models promoting the drinks as you walk through the pits. In 1985, Skoal Bandit chewing tobacco was being given away in small pouches to anyone who looked over 16, today it's energy drinks, hot dogs (if you own a Toyota), and various goodies in exchange for your e-mail address.

Just as Honda were making headlines in '85 with their rider line-up they're creating similar headlines in 2017 by signing reigning motocross champion Ken Roczen to ride the electric-start factory HRC CRF450R. Mechanic Oscar Wirdman keeps the gleaming red Honda (sporting one-off camouflage graphics as part of this military appreciation event) tuned to perfection and the team use performance data gathered by sensors on the rear shock and exhaust to make any changes to the electronic mapping – a far cry from '85 when the mechanic would check over the nuts and bolts and wipe off the number plates between heats. Roczen was the centre of attention when he turned up to the season-opening press conference wearing a suit and then proceeded to win the Main Event by 16 seconds.

KTM were virtually non-existent in America in 1985 but have a much higher profile in the pits today. Managed by five-time world champion – and living legend – Roger DeCoster and with

reigning SX champ Ryan Dungey riding with the #1 plate on his factory edition Red Bull KTM SX450F.

In 1985 DeCoster was the manager of Team Honda having taken up the post after his racing career ended with a win in his final 500GP in Luxembourg 1980. His Honda team were dominant through the '80s and since he took over at KTM in 2011 they have also become the team to beat. The queue for Dungey's autograph was by far the longest although Yamaha veteran Chad Reed and Honda's Roczen both had long lines too.

Foreign riders are now in demand as teams look to the MXGPs for fresh talent in search of the American dream. Australia's Reed, Germany's Roczen and France's Marvin Musquin are among the fastest riders in America, perhaps justifying the FIM World Championship status the series now has.

Inside the stadium the track looks spectacular. Foam Tuff blocks have replaced the straw bales of the '80s and Monster signage has replaced the Miller beer banners but it is the track design that has changed the most.

In the '80s track design consisted mostly of double jumps and whoop sections that were 'doubled' through. Petco Park is home to the SD Padres baseball team, meaning it's diamond shaped rather than rectangular like a football pitch. The Dirt Wurx track builders have created a gnarly whoop section between two long rhythm sections with jump combinations that offer a few alternative choices and create passing opportunities. The take-offs for the triples look steep! There had been fears of a mud race after a wet week but the track looked

perfect and even required watering before the evening started. Two bulldozers and three skid steer shovels were used to groom the track between every race.

Qualifying sessions are run in the afternoon in a virtually empty stadium to sift the entries down to the fastest 40 that will make the evening show. The factory riders hit every jump perfectly, getting faster each lap and make the track look quite easy. Then the non-factory riders go out and as they bounce, ricochet and miss time their way around you realise how difficult it really is.

After three riders crashed on the same jump – including a spectacular endo by Geico Honda star Jeremy Martin that catapulted him with a double somersault into the next track lane – the Dirt Wurx crew scraped six inches off to make it flow better into the following turn and keep the racing as safe as possible. The 1985 track was left untouched resulting in the jumps wearing down as the night progressed which made it a little one lined.

The show starts at 18:30 which means the warm afternoon sun has set dropping the temperature to about 15 degrees. About 200 military personnel paraded around the track to loud applause and a navy officer sang the national anthem before the top riders were introduced with fireworks, music and flame throwers and complete laps of honour with high-fives for the service men and women. Nearly all the riders have one-off graphics and riding gear emblazoned with stars, stripes and camouflage.

After all the fireworks, racing started at seven o'clock with the 250s out first for their heats. >>



KTM's Marvin Musquin is one of the many foreigners racing the 2017 series – something that was more or less unheard of in 1985



30 years ago Jeff Ward raced this green meanie to the 1987 SX title



450 rookie Cooper Webb is struggling to find his feet in the big boy class







## FIVE MINUTES WITH...

### Gareth Swanepoel

**DBR:** Swanie, what are you doing now that you've retired from racing?

**GS:** "I still work with Yamaha. I train some really good riders and also some test riding."

**DBR:** Tell us about your guys...

**GS:** "I work with Cooper Webb, then there's the Star Yamaha guys – that's Aaron Plessinger, Colt Nichols, Dan Reardon while he's filling in and Dylan Ferrandis. There's also Bradley Taft on the Rock River Yamaha team."

**DBR:** Cooper Webb had an incredible year in 2016 on the 250 but hasn't started off this season so well. What's it gonna take for him to be up with Roczen and Dungey who seem to be ahead of everyone right now?

**GS:** "It's tough! We went from an extreme high last year where he dominated everything – we won supercross and won outdoors – even though he had a lot of stuff going on. He broke his wrist in supercross and still managed to win the championship, he had a few injuries here and there and even at the Des Nations he was riding with a broken finger."

"We had to take some time off after the season just to let his wrist and finger completely heal and to be honest we just started really late. We started almost six weeks behind – there was nothing we could do, he just needed to get healthy. I think by about round six or seven he'll be much more competitive but I personally believe it's probably gonna take a year to get to the speed of Roczen and Dungey."

**DBR:** A lot of European fans will be interested to see how Dylan Ferrandis gets on – how's his preparation going?

**GS:** "So far so good. His preparation is going really good – he's got a lot of potential and a lot of speed. I think he could be a surprise, he's on the best team and we're working together. I think he could be someone who could step in and win supercross right away, almost like a Pourcel, but it's just gonna come down to how much he's prepared to listen and cooperate. We're working on that right now – the days he listens and cooperates are good so if we can get him to do that all the time he'll be just fine."

The races are now timed and with 52 second lap times there would be extra laps beyond the usual 15 for the 250s and 20 for the 450 final.

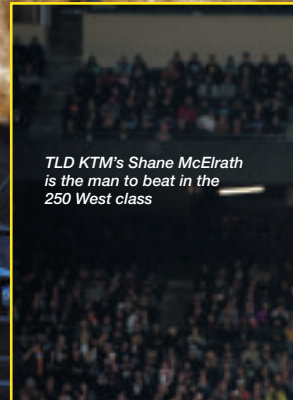
The racing is intense but it seems that corner speed and a good run through the whoops are what separate the good from the great. A giant screen shows the action, post-race interviews and adverts that add to the slick production of the races as vendors selling huge bags of popcorn and giant drinks to keep the crowd fed.

In the 250 final Shane McElrath – wearing Stars and Stripes gear – won after a four-way battle with Josh Hill, Martin Davalos and Aaron Plessinger that looked hard to beat for action and intensity. Davalos was devastated after going from first to fourth in the final few laps.

When the 450s blasted off the gate it was Dungey and Roczen in front. Marvin Musquin nearly looped off on the first tabletop jump and launched off the track but still managed to save



Ken Roczen and the factory Honda proved to be quick out of the blocks



TLD KTM's Shane McElrath is the man to beat in the 250 West class

it and continue on in third place. The Dungey-Roczen rivalry is shaping up to be as good as Bailey and Johnson in the '80s. Dungey had earlier set the fastest time of the day and now led for seven minutes before Roczen dived underneath in a 180 degree bowl turn to take the lead.

After pulling out a 16 second advantage last week it looked like game over but Dungey was never more than a couple of seconds away and was within a second for the last few laps pushing Roczen hard before a mistake after the whoops gave Roczen space to breathe on the last lap. On the podium both riders were the perfect ambassadors for their team, magnanimous and gracious while thanking everyone as well as remembering the military personnel that the event was dedicated to – no wonder the clean cut, all American boy Ryan Dungey is so popular but Roczen matches him without a hint of a German accent.

As the champagne corks finished popping the crew were already packing up. The dirt jumps will be reconfigured for a monster truck show next week.

Supercross has evolved to become a specialised form of racing requiring unique skills and bike set-up. The whole show has moved on from 1985 in every way, offering a spectacular night out to casual fans and great racing for die-hard moto-nuts.

The crowd was diverse with families sitting alongside young couples, old couples and an Englishman wondering why it had taken so long to come back. It certainly wouldn't be another 32 years...

California is a long way to go for just one race so with A2 the following Saturday it seemed a shame not to live the West Coast lifestyle for another week. After two rounds with identical podiums the pre-season speculation about who would be fast had now turned to whether



Anaheim Angels stadium offers a peculiar shaped floor space for the track builders to work with



## FIVE MINUTES WITH...

### Dean Wilson

**DBR:** Dean, you're one of the high profile riders that didn't get picked up by a team this year. Tell us about your season so far.

**DW:** "For me what's important is just to be at the races. I've only done four races in the last two years so I've more or less missed the past couple of years of supercross so I feel that just being at the races is important. I'm just setting small goals and achieving them and then hopefully the goals will change. As of right now it's to be in the top 10 which I think is realistic. Maybe in a few races we can be top five but it's important to just be at the races, being consistent and staying healthy."

**DBR:** Tell us about your set-up. Is it just you, dad and a van – old-school privateer style?

**DW:** "More or less. The first three races here and in San Diego are pretty convenient to do because it's not too far but when we go east it's gonna be more difficult. Although I have a place in Florida it's still tough being a privateer but once we figure out some sort of funding hopefully we can keep going. It would be a shame to get some momentum going and then have to stop."

**DBR:** Your original plan was to do the West Coast rounds and hopefully pick up a fill-in ride. Is there anything in the pipeline?

**DW:** "I'm just focusing on my program. If something came up that was long term I would probably do it but just a fill-in for a couple of races is not really worth it to me."

**DBR:** Looking at social media you're getting a lot of respect for putting this deal together and racing rather than staying home. Has the fans' reaction surprised you?

**DW:** "Yeah I think I probably have gained some people's respect. I've been a factory rider pretty much my whole pro career but being pitted out if a semi isn't what wins you the race. What makes you do well at a race is being prepared, working hard and staying focused and having the right people around you. I feel like I've got good people with me and while I may not have the best support I have enough support to at least do these first five races so I'm just giving it my best, recovering from the injuries that I've been through over the last five years and trying to work back to being a front runner again. I've accepted the fact that it may take time. I'd like this year to be a good rebuilding year where I'm at every race. That would be so good for me and really help me for next year."

**DBR:** Thanks Dean, hopefully we'll see you back on the podium soon...



A broken arm will sideline K-Roc for the rest of the series

Roczen could last another 15 races or would Dungey's consistency win through – the answer to that question would come half way through the main event.

News that Malcolm Stewart would be returning and rumours about brother James' plans, plus the forecast of heavy rain that could turn A2 into a mud-fest meant there was still plenty to discuss on the moto websites. There was also Donald Trump's historic presidential inauguration which seemed to divide opinion as much as if not more than the Roczen/Dungey debate.

As race day dawned, 'The Donald' had been sworn in as the 45th President and a lucky break in the weather after two days of storms that caused mud slides and flooding gave the track crew the chance to fix any damage. The track had been built on Wednesday and covered up – when the sheets came off it was in perfect condition.

Anaheim's Angel Stadium has a bigger

floor area than Petco Park giving the track designers more room to work with. An extra rhythm section, two whoop sections and a cool over-under bridge all added up to 56 second laps but would provide plenty of drama as the evening unfolded.

The 250s saw baby faced Austin Forkner take his first heat race win but it was team-mate Justin Hill who comfortably won the Main Event with Aaron Plessinger second again and points leader McElrath third. Jeremy Martin still couldn't buy a start if they were on sale and although he passed 12 riders on his way to 10th the leaders were already drinking champagne when he finished.

In the 450 heats, Stewart marked his return with a strong second behind Roczen. In heat two, Dungey crashed exiting turn one, damaging his throttle and was out. Musquin and Anderson were trying to find a way past the mobile chicane created by Vince Freise when Friese pulled a cheap takeout move on

Anderson, sending Marvin to the semi and Anderson home after he punched Friese as they left the track.

As the 450s left the gate for their Main Event Dungey dived up the inside and slid under Cooper Webb as they exited turn one with Seeley third and Roczen midpack. Approaching half distance Roczen was up to third but as he tried to pressure Seeley, his Honda caught a kicker which launched him over the bars and into the next jump face. He was eventually assisted off the track, his race and championship over. A stall by Seeley gifted Musquin his best finish of the year in second place and Webb also claimed a season-best fourth.

Dungey now leads team-mate Musquin by seven points with 18 over Honda duo Seeley and Roczen. There are still 350 points up for grabs but if you're not called Ryan or Marvin then it already looks like a long season ahead. |





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## GAJSER CHIEF

In the April issue of DBR we'll have coverage from the opening MXGP of the year in Qatar where reigning champ Tim Gajser will be looking to get his season started with a bang. We'll also have a look at the Hawkstone International, more Arenacross action than you can shake your stick at plus the DBR Megatest where we get to grips with no fewer than 14 2017-model motocrossers and ride 'em back to back to find ourselves a favourite. Sounds like fun, huh? We'll catch you on March 10 then...

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